A LACANIAN AND POST-ALTHUSSERIAN APPROACH TO HOMOPHOBIA AND ITS RESOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a theoretical analysis. It attempts to address the problem of how to conceive the process by which, in certain cultures, a particular social phenomenon, the stigmatisation of homosexuality, has powerful negative effects at the level of individual emotions. Individuals' abhorrence of their own homosexual desires, as well as individuals' abhorrence of the homosexuality of others, are considered. The answer provided is held to apply to both men and women. The problem is also addressed, within the same parameters, of how change from abhorrence to acceptance of homosexuality is to be conceived with respect to the relation between social and individual phenomena.

In order to develop an answer to these questions, relevant aspects of appropriate theoretical frameworks are described and an integration of them developed. These frameworks are: Lacanian psychoanalysis, which provides an account of the individual subject's relation to the social; and a post-structuralist view of ideology, which analyzes the specific contributions made by the social phenomenon of ideology to the way the individual makes sense of the world. A particular aspect of ideology as understood in this view is emphasised and developed. This is the importance ideology is understood to give to the concepts "natural" and "unnatural". The ideological role of these concepts is then argued to provide a link, for the present purposes, between the psychoanalytic theory of the subject and the relevant

theory of ideology. In this way a synthesis of the two theoretical areas, suitable for the present aims, is developed.

This synthesis is then applied to the problem outlined above of making sense of homophobia (the abhorrence of homosexuality), and to the problem outlined above of making sense of the resolution of homophobia (the change to acceptance of homosexuality). The homophobic individual is argued to be best conceived of as trapped in a complex set of contradictions resulting from the collusion of unconscious strivings with the ideologically emphasised idea of what is natural. The resolution of homophobia is argued to be best conceived of as a resolution of the above-mentioned set of contradictions through modifications of the role given by ideology to the concepts of what is natural and unnatural.

This conceptualisation of the synthesis of aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis and aspects of a theory of ideology is then suggested to have a variety of further applications of the type developed here.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to offer at least part of an explanation of why it is that there exists a widespread abhorrence of homosexuality in Western cultures, such that people who come into contact with homosexuals experience a powerful feeling of aversion or dread, and such that almost all homosexuals themselves experience a powerful feeling of self-abhorrence upon discovering homosexual desires within themselves.

For the purposes of the thesis, homosexuality or homosexual desire will be defined as feelings of emotional and sexual attraction towards individuals of the same biological sex as the person experiencing the attraction. Such factors as exclusivity of homosexual or heterosexual desire, or the degree of preponderance of either in any given case, will not be considered here. The present concern is to describe the mechanisms by which the abhorrence occurs where it occurs, so that the details of its incidence are largely irrelevant in this context. The fact that such abhorrence occurs at all is sufficient to justify the posing of the present question. "Homosexual" and "gay" will be used synonymously throughout.

1.1 The Abhorrence of Homosexuality

There is a burgeoning literature which deals with the psychological and idealogical effects of the homo-

sexual label on homosexuals and on those who have contact with them directly or indirectly. It is clear from this literature that there is a general reaction of aversion to or abhorrence of homosexuality at some point in both cases (Bobys & Laner, 1979; Bullough, 1979; Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Dank, 1971; Goodyear, Abadie & Barquest, 1981; Hart & Richardson, 1981; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Humphreys, 1972; Lee, 1977; Malyon, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Morin & Garfinkle, 1978; Morin & Schultz, 1978; Weinberg, 1973). This abhorrence has been given the name "homophobia". Originally defined by Weinberg (1973) as "the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals", it is now used to indicate any "negative attitude, belief, or action directed against homosexual persons" (Hudson & Rickets, 1980, p.357). These include "the responses of fear, disgust, anger, discomfort, and aversion" (ibid., p.358).

This term will be used throughout the thesis, and purely as a descriptive term. It will refer both to the feelings of abhorrence experienced by gays in relation to their own homosexuality, and to the feelings of abhorrence experienced by those in direct and indirect contact with them. No reference to the psychoanalytic use of the term "phobia" is intended; this thesis is itself an attempt to provide a fresh explanation of the mechanism of this aversion to homosexuality. Clearly, a number of reactions are

covered by the present usage of homophobia (Mosher & O'Grady, 1979; San Miguel & Millham, 1977). The ensuing analysis, which does not pretend to be a complete account of homophobia, will explain aspects of some of these reactions. It will also help to clarify their mutual relations. This will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.

The literature on homophobia is largely concerned with the variables which intensify or alleviate the psychological and ideological effects of the stigma, and tends to take as a starting point the fact that there is such a feeling of aversion associated with the label. Insofar as the aversive feeling has itself been explained, this has been done mainly by way of ad hoc hypotheses in the style of micro-sociological studies (Fein & Nuehring, 1981; Jacobs & Tedford, 1980; MacDonald & Games, 1974; Millham & Weinberger, 1977; Ross, 1978; San Miguel & Millham, 1977; Storms, 1978; Weinberger & Millham, 1979).

There are a few studies which attempt to explain the feeling of abhorrence towards homosexuality in terms of a systematic theory. Some of these are interactionist in approach, of which the prime example is Plummer (1975), and some are psychoanalytic (Hocquenghem, 1978; Mieli, 1980).

1.2 The Interactionist Approach

The interactionist approach is wanting in a number of respects. Firstly, it is at this stage more a

programme for research than a systematic explanation in its own right (Plummer, 1981, p.75). Secondly, it is incapable of providing an explanation of homophobia beyond fairly crude levels of analysis. For symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework based upon the assumptions that human individuals or subjects act according to their perceptions of the meanings of the events and objects in their worlds; that these meanings are developed in interaction with other people; and that the perceived meanings may be renegotiated. These are the premises with which an interactionist account begins (Plummer, 1975, p.11). There is no means, therefore, within an interactionist framework, by which the ultimate nature of the interacting subjects can be analysed. For an unanalysed subject is always presupposed in the application of the framework. A subject who can already perceive meanings is a precondition for the premises of the framework to be workable. This thesis aims to demonstrate that a framework which can analyse the nature or constitution of the human subject in detail infuses an explanation of the mechanisms of homophobia with a wealth of useful detail. Such detail cannot be obtained by study undertaken within an interactionist approach. The deficiency of the interactionist framework in this respect is therefore an important one.

The psychoanalytic framework adopted in this thesis is certainly capable of providing a detailed analysis of

the subject. Furthermore, particularly following Lacan's contribution, psychoanalysis provides a highly rigorous account of the relation of the individual to others, to society at large, and especially to language (Lacan, 1977a, passim.; Lemaire, 1977, passim.; Wilden, 1968, passim.). This clearly suggests its suitability in developing an account of the emotional effects of labelling.

1.3 The Classical Psychoanalytic Approach

The psychoanalytic literature on homosexuality, however, is almost entirely concerned with aetiology and "cure" (Bergler, 1958; Bieber et al., 1962; Freud, 1905, 1920, 1922; Hocquenghem, 1972; Kwawer, 1980; Lachman, 1975; Masserman, 1969; Socarides, 1978, 1979, 1981). The focus of such research is on treatment and change of the homosexual orientation, rather than on the nature and effect of the value judgment made on it. Kwawer, writing in 1980, could state that

> "With the sole exception of Clara Thompson's contribution which held open the possibility of adaptive homosexual solutions to human problems of intimacy, self-esteem, and loneliness, psychoanalytic writers implicitly or explicitly conclude that the goal of treatment with homosexuals is to change or cure the patient of homosexuality, which is seen as a psychiatric illness (pp.76-77).

And although the American Psychiatric Association with-

drew the definition of homosexuality as a pathology in 1973 (Socarides, 1978), the controversy still rages amongst psychoanalysts and the majority of American psychiatrists still believe homosexuality to be pathological (Socarides, ibid., pp.424-425). It should be noted that in the United States psychoanalysis and psychiatry are virtually indistinguishable (Fine, 1979, p.114ff.).

The idea of pathology has been used by such people to account for homophobia in homosexuals themselves, as well as for the feeling of oppression or rejection they often experience after resolving their self-abhorrence.

> The homosexual, no matter what her/his level of adaptation and function in other areas of life, is severely handicapped in the most vital area - namely, that of her interpersonal relations...She also harbours considerable aggression against both men and women while simultaneously is in deep need of affection and support so totally denied her in earliest childhood.
>
> Pathology, organically and psychologically, may be defined as a failure to function, with concomitant pain and/or suffering. Beneath this obvious failure of function and the secondary <u>external</u> conflicts it may provoke lie the agony, sorrow, tragedy, fear and

> guilt of both conscious and unconscious nature which pervades the homosexual's life (Socarides, 1981, p.510).

The classical psychoanalytic view of homophobia will be criticised here on several grounds. Firstly, there is disagreement in the psychoanalytic community itself on this issue, so that there is room for another opinion. Secondly, a great deal of research suggests that the above-described classical psychoanalytic view is invalid. Thirdly, the assertion of pathology does not sufficiently explain homophobia, for both empirical and theoretical reasons.

The view that pathology is intrinsic to homosexuality and so explains homophobia is not unanimously held in the psychoanalytic community. "Wiedeman's review of psychoanalytic literature through the mid-1960s concludes that 'there is no agreement that a specific libidinal fixation accounts for' (p.394) homosexuality, and there is no 'single genetic or structural pattern that would apply to all or even a major part of cases...' (p.405)" (Kwawer, 1980, p.75). The review cited here by Kwawer refers to Wiedeman (1964). Other psychoanalysts who support this acknowledgement are Lachman (1975), Mitchell (1978) and Spitzer (1981).

The existence of such disagreement in the psychoanalytic community in itself justifies the development of an explanation of homophobia other than that of its being an automatic consequence of pathology.

There is, moreover, a great deal of research that shows no detectable pathology specific to homosexuals or differentiating them from heterosexuals, least of all fear and guilt in interpersonal relations (Barr & Catts, 1974; Coleman, 1978; Freedman, 1975; Freud, 1905, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1951; Gonsiorek, 1982; Oberstone & Sukoneck, 1976; Siegelman, 1978, 1979; Silverstein, 1976). This research also supports the finding cited above that homosexuality cannot even be regarded as a clinical entity about which such clinical generalisations as Socarides' may be made (FitzGerald, 1977; Hooker, 1969; Plummer, 1975, p.56ff; Wiedeman, 1964).

Only a part of this research demonstrating the relative health of gays is psychoanalytic; "We believe.... psychoanalytic treatment need not require or even desire that homosexual persons become heterosexual...The aopropriate and mature development of the individual's particular sexual orientation is our aim" (Herron, Kinter, Sollinger & Trubowitz, 1980, p.403). The rest of the research is not undertaken in the analytic session, and therefore comes out of a different methodology to the psychoanalytic research being criticised here. It therefore probably contributes nothing to an understanding of unconscious dynamics and so may not be used to refute the psychoanalytic findings directly. But this does not make it insignificant. For it is possible, and, indeed, necessary, to distinguish "the pursuit of understanding of psychodynamics from the medico-moral diagnostic enter-

prise" (Kwawer, op. cit., p.73).

To put this differently, the "assumption that an individual's sexual orientation is caused, i.e., that it has roots and a developmental course, does not imply in itself that such development is pathological" (Herron et al., op. cit., p.396). The same assertion is argued by Lachman (1975), Mitchell (1978) and Spitzer (1981), who point out that evaluation of behaviour and feelings as pathological can only be made on the basis of present functioning, not on the basis of aetiology.

This confusion, between establishing a psychodynamics for homosexuality - such as has also been established for heterosexuality - on the one hand, and establishing homosexuality as pathological, on the other, is to be found in Socarides and almost the entire body of psychoanalytic literature of which he is representative in his confusion. Referring to the removal of the pathological classification from homosexuality, Socarides mentions "The changes...rendering chaotic fundamental truths about unconscious psychodynamics as well as the interrelationship between anatomy and psychosexual identity" (1978, p.414). He has clearly conflated the fact of aetiology with the value judgment of pathology.

This is where the extensive non-psychoanalytic research, showing homosexuality to be as non-pathological a condition as heterosexuality, becomes significant. For, as Kwawer puts is, "the interpretation is a choice from a complicated range of human reactions to a patient, a

choice of what strikes one personally as the most significant feature to comment on. Thus...how an analyst thinks about homosexuality is necessarily also a statement of countertransference" (op. cit., pp.73-74). And the positive outcomes of research into homosexual health vis-à-vis heterosexual health suggest that analysts are motivated to judge homosexuality as pathological by homophobia rather than the findings of their own research or the implications of their theoretical framework.

Furthermore, even assuming that that part of the psychoanalytic literature which asserts that homosexuality is pathological is correct, this would still not be sufficient to explain homophobia in the homosexual, let alone in others who are merely in contact with homosexuals. Let us assume for the moment that Bieber and his associates are correct in saying that "All psychoanalytic theories assume that adult homosexuality is psychopathologic" (1962, p.18) and that homosexuality is "a pathologic, biosocial, psychosexual adaptation consequent to pervasive fears surrounding the expression of heterosexual impulses. In our view, every homosexual is, in reality, a "latent" heterosexual; hence we expected to find evidences of heterosexual strivings among the homosexual patients of our study" (ibid., p.220, insertion added). The psychopathological nature of homosexuality only has meaning if it expresses itself in the lives of homosexuals. It is clear that the fact of homosexuality itself is expressed in homosexual life-

styles. "The obligatory homosexual is unable to function in...the male-female sexual union and the affective state of love, tenderness, and joy with a partner of the opposite sex" (Socarides, 1981, p.511). But it does not follow from this that homosexuals are incapable of living a life in every way as satisfactory to them as heterosexual life is satisfying to heterosexuals. When Socarides calls the above description of heterosexual love "the most meaningful relationship in life" (ibid.), and implies that a partner "of the opposite sex" is essential for the experience of "the affective state of love, tenderness, and joy", he is clearly making a value judgment for which psychoanalytic theory provides no basis, and which the above-cited research on the relative health of gays invalidates.

Indeed, even if research affirming the relative health of homosexuals did not exist, psychoanalytic research and theory would expose the above value judgment for the arbitrary importation of a moral standpoint that it is. For psychoanalysis above all demonstrates that human life is generally characterised by deeply rooted unconscious fears, as in the fear of incest and the fear of castration (Lacan, 1977a, p.323). But few people suggest that we ought to regard the inability to commit incest as morally and functionally reprehensible, simply because it is born of "pervasive fears surrounding the expression of....impulses" (Bieber et al, ibid.).

Furthermore, many heterosexuals are incapable of functioning in the male-male or the female-female sexual union and experiencing the affective state of love, tenderness, and joy with a partner of the same sex. And this incapacity is sometimes the result of an unconscious fear, such as the fear of castration. Freud himself points out how difficult it is in analysis "to convince a man that a passive attitude to men does not always signify castration" (1937a, pp.251-252). But few people suggest that this incapacity to function because of deep-rooted fears is morally and functionally reprehensible simply by virtue of its aetiology.

One of the exceptions to this restraint in denigrating heterosexuality is Mieli (1980). "The objective of educastration is the transformation of the infant, in tendency polymorphous and 'perverse', into a heterosexual adult, erotically mutilated but conforming to the Norm" (p.24). And,

> Male bonding is the grotesque expression of a paralysed and unspoken homosexuality, which can be grasped, in the negative, in the denial of women, whom they speak of phallocratically, without any genuine consideration, reducing them to a hole, i.e. to something that does not exist (p.127).

Freud himself repeatedly maintained that a homosexual lifestyle is eminently viable.

> Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development... If he is unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, inhibited in his social life, analysis may bring him harmony, peace of mind, full efficiency, whether he remains homosexual or gets changed (1951, p.786).

Similar remarks may be found in, inter alia, Freud 1905 (p.138), 1920 (p.150), 1925 (p.38), and 1930 (p.104). As Kwawer puts it, "Freud's self-awareness stands in marked contrast to the absence of self-scrutiny in some subsequent psychoanalytic writings about homosexuality...which are insensitive to the countertransferential implications of what is proposed" (op. cit., p.74).

Some psychoanalysts themselves assert that it is not the actual effects on the homosexual's life that make her/his sexual preference notably pathological, but its psychodynamic peculiarity. Present functioning of the individual is seen to be irrelevant in evaluating pathology; aetiology is what counts.

> The theoretical orientation...that preferential homosexuality results from disordered psycho-sexual development, is essential to distinguishing that which is clinically significant in adolescent homosexual behaviour. If homosexuality were no more than an alternative way of life, one would be concerned clinically only with the factors affecting the individual's capacity to live comfortably and healthily with his homoerotic object choice (Gadpaille, 1969, p.63).

But once homosexuality is considered clinically important only because of "disordered psycho-sexual development", then it is clear from the above discussion that it is considered clinically important by an externally imposed value judgment and not by virtue of meaningful effects on the homosexual's life.

Thus the assertion that homosexuality is pathological gives insufficient grounds to account for homophobia in self and others, since contentment and homosexuality are quite compatible. That heterosexuality is essential for happy or self-accepting being is an assumption, as Storr (1964, p.83), for one, admits. And it is an assumption which all the evidence indicates is invalid. "In our listening experience so far, we have not found the 'happy homosexual'. Nor, for that matter have we had much luck in finding the 'happy heterosexual' either" (Herron et al., op. cit., p.396).

1.4 Lacan and the Present Approach in Contrast to Classical Psychoanalysis

Lacan himself is strongly opposed to the premises which make the condemnation of "deviant development" possible. He has "major differences with contemporary ego psychologists...in that he does not recognize the ego as the centre of the perception/consciousness system, or as an autonomous agency, or as the psychic representative of the reality principle. The ego, for Lacan, is a construct... the rigid mold into which man pours his alienated identity" (Evans, 1979). Thus adaptation to society via the reality testing of the strengthened ego is not supported by Lacan's psychoanalysis. In Lacan's words, speaking of the ego and analytic therapy,

> For if its health is defined by its adaptation to a reality that is regarded quite simply as being suited to it, and if you need the co-operation of the "healthy part of the ego" in order to reduce, in the other part no doubt, incompatibilities with reality...is it not clear that there is no other way of distinguishing the healthy part of the subject's ego than by its agreement with your point of view, which, in order to be regarded as healthy, becomes the measure of things, just as there is no other criterion of cure than the complete adoption by the subject of this measure of yours (1977a, p.135).

It will be assumed in this thesis, therefore, that abhorrence of homosexuality does not follow automatically upon the existence of homosexuality, but requires explanation. Indeed, even if the psychoanalytic literature cited above were not confused but correct in regarding homosexuality as naturally abominable or abhorrent, there would still be room for additional explanation, since psychoanalysis leaves room for over-determination of human phenomena. In Lacan's words,

> By referring only to the development of the organism, the typology fails to recognize...the structure in which the subject is caught up respectively in phantasy, in drive, in sublimation. I am at present developing the theory of this structure (note 1966) (1977a, p.177, insertion in original).

The present attempt to describe the mechanisms of homophobia is not so much given justification by the above arguments, therefore, as shown to be vitally needed in addition to being justified. This will be supported in Lacanian terms in the appropriate chapter (Chapter Five, sections 5.1 and 5.2).

1.5 Radical Psychoanalysis

There are two psychoanalytic works which address themselves to the problem of homophobia. The first is by Hocquenghem (1978). This emerges from the

explicitly and radically subversive, post-Lacanian perspective of Deleuze and Guattari (1977), so that its arguments support aims extraneous to those of this thesis. The same problem applies in the case of the other major psychoanalytic work, by Mieli (1980). Both writers account for homophobia in terms of repressed homosexuality in the homophobe, but this does not account for the rejection of homosexuality by those in whom it is not repressed, although possibly latent, that is, homosexuals or latent homosexuals themselves. It is in fact the very desire to repress or deny that requires explanation.

1.6 Details of the Present Approach

This thesis will therefore involve a specific and more detailed exploration of the mechanisms of homophobia than has so far been attempted. Where other work on the topic has dealt with the social functions served by the stigmatisation of homosexuality, and the detailed ways in which such stigmatisation is experienced and dealt with, this work will attempt to describe the mechanism by which the experience of abhorrence is aroused with such force by the categorisation. This account, that is, attempts to provide an explanatory link between the social processes through which homosexual stigmatisation occurs, and the processes by which phenomena become emotionally significant to individuals.

Once this has been done, the resulting conceptualisation will be applied to the process of change from abhorrence to acceptance of homosexuality in self and others. Such acceptance clearly does occur. There is a large body of work demonstrating such a transition to acceptance, which includes the references cited earlier on the relative health of homosexuals as well as the following references: Cass (1979), Coleman (1982), Dank (1971), Jacobs and Tedford (1980), Lee (1977), MacDonald (1982), Troiden (1979).

In attempting this description of the mechanisms of homophobia and its resolution, Lacanian psychoanalysis is a peculiarly appropriate framework within which to work. As mentioned earlier, Lacan emphasizes the relation of the individual to others, to society at large, and to the symbolic formations in that society, most crucially that of language. This clearly provides a suitable framework within which to consider the effects on the individual of such a symbolic act as placing him/her in a stigmatising category.

> For it is only after the linguistic analysis of the phenomenon of language that one can legitimately establish the relation that it constitutes in the subject, and at the same time delimit the order of the "machines" (in the purely associative sense that this term possesses in the mathematical theory of networks) that may realize this phenomenon (Lacan, 1977a, p.187).

Furthermore, the importance of language in the Lacanian framework allows an understanding of the ways in which language itself operates to be brought to bear on the topic. In particular, ideology, insofar as it operates through language, will be shown to be of great importance in answering the question at hand. A particular conception of ideology will be adopted here, because of its elucidation of the concepts "natural" and "unnatural", which are self-evidently relevant to the topic of aversion to homosexuality. This conception is that of some post-Althusserian theorists of ideology, notably Barthes (1972a), Bennett (1979), and Coward and Ellis (1977).

The aim of this thesis, then will be to combine a psychoanalytic perspective with an ideological perspective in explaining why homosexuality arouses such a powerful abhorrence in some of those to whom it may be attributed and in some of those directly or indirectly associated with or in contact with them, in Western cultures.

Such a synthesis of Lacanian psychoanalysis and post-Althusserian theory of ideology has already been attempted and perhaps achieved by the group of writers associated with the French journal Tel Quel, and, indeed, sketched by Althusser himself (1971b). The most important of these for our purposes is Julia Kristeva (1980), and an introduction to their collective contribution is to be found in Coward and Ellis (1977). Their synthesis has, however, been established for different purposes to the present ones, the purposes of literary

criticism, and consequently different aspects both of Lacan and of post-Althusserian theory of ideology have been emphasised. The synthesis of the two theoretical areas has therefore been argued afresh here, and aspects of Lacan and post-Althusserian ideological theory emphasised and elaborated which are more appropriate to the aims of this thesis.

Thus, in the chapter on Lacan's theory of the constitution of the human subject, his view that the subject may only be conceived of in the same way as a linguistic unit, the signifier, will be emphasised. So will his view that the subject cannot help conceiving itself in a way antithetical to this true state of affairs. A great deal more detail will be given, but almost all of this will be given only in order to allow an understanding of the views outlined above, and in order to clarify the meaning and use of Lacan's terminology. It will therefore be specified where the matter under discussion in that chapter is not centrally important to the thesis, and serves rather to explain or give a context for the matter which is of central importance. Only a small fraction of what Lacan has to say, then, is taken up and used here.

Similarly, in the chapter on ideology, the general operation of ideology, insofar as it operates through language, and the role of the concepts of the "natural" and the "unnatural" will be elaborated. The linguistic dimension of ideology will be considered in terms of language only insofar as language is relevant to Lacan's

conceptualisation of the human subject. Almost everything else which the relevant theorists of ideology have to say will be explicitly ignored. There are many highly controversial areas in this field, some of which will have indirect bearing on the arguments laid out here. But if the various possible viewpoints in each of the controversial areas were given due consideration in thinking through the present analysis of homophobia, this thesis would be many times its present length, and, indeed, would deal less with its present psychological topic than with sociological or historical materialist topics.

The best that can be done, then, given that one must start somewhere, is to specify which assumptions have been taken as premises, which assumptions are irrelevant here though they may be crucial considerations in other contexts, and where this conceptualisation articulates with the conceptualisations of other theoretical areas. All of this will be attempted.

1.7 Some Notes on a View of Science

The last point mentioned in the preceding section, the articulation with other theoretical areas, will be pertinent throughout the thesis. It will allow work which tests the assumptions on which this work is based, to feed back into this conceptualisation and support or correct it. And it will allow the rigour of this work, insofar as it is valid, to feed back into the areas from which it derives, and the areas to which it is adjacent, to correct and refine them.

For the scientific value of this theoretical type of thesis does not lie solely in its validity as a description of reality. It lies rather in its epistemological consistency and rigour, its ability to make the world intelligible in a systematic way. This is why at bottom Lacan is preferable in the present view to interactionism. And this view, indeed, is the broadly structuralist or semiotic view of science proper both to Lacan and to some of Althusser's successors.

> What is structuralism? Before being a philosophy, as some tend to see it, it is a method of analysis...one could say a structure is a combination and relation of formal elements which reveal their logical coherence within given objects of analysis (Ehrmann, 1970, p.ix).

Interactionism leaves the human subject irreducible to analysis, whereas Lacan's psychoanalysis makes the subject eminently accessible to analysis. This does not make Lacan's framework correspond more closely to reality than that of the interactionists. But it does make parts of the world intelligible where interactionism does not. Thus it is Lacan's epistemological sophistication which makes him scientifically more respectworthy in the present view, rather than the correspondence of his theory to reality.

This is not to say that a theory may be scientifically acceptable which has no relation to the world whatsoever.

It must, on the contrary, make the world intelligible, and therefore must not be in more than apparent contradiction with the phenomena of the world. But there is always more than one construction that can be put on phenomena, each of which constructions may correspond equally well to the world. It is at that point that the present view of science becomes pertinent, that is, the extension of the world's intelligibility through epistemological rigour.

The idea that reality may be empirically explored in an unequivocal way is what "Levi-Strauss calls 'sterile empiricism', that is, the notion that the 'real' world consists of a single undeniable reality" (Hawkes, 1977, p.55).

> Structural anthropology opens the door to the notion that all societies construct their <u>own</u> realities in accordance with mental or psychological principles that determine form and function, and that they then covertly project these upon whatever the real world may in fact be (ibid., p.56).

The scientist is not exempt from constructing reality. "Nor should we ever forget that in science established truths do not exist. The scientist does not supply true answers; rather he asks true questions" (Levi-Strauss, 1970, p.40). Finally, Lacan's word on the matter is that - speaking of the world signified by

language, which gives the world meaning for the scientist who studies it -

> The dominant factor here is the unity of signification, which proves never to be resolved into a true indication of the real, but always refers back to another signification. That is to say, the signification is realized only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality (1977a, p.126).

The phenomena, that is, always underdetermine the construal that may be made of them, so that the internal consistency of the theory or construal and its consistency with other theoretical areas, becomes the means of assessing its scientific worth.

Thus the scientific value of this theoretical thesis lies in its susceptibility to the refinement of its epistemological premises by the contributions of work in other theoretical areas, and in the contribution it may make to the epistemological refinement of such other work, because of the detailed working through of the logical implications of its own premises. In this way the conceptual equipment with which the world is made intelligible is perpetually sophisticated by being tested in many different and related applications. This has already been the case for a long time in linguistics, anthropology, historical materialism, psychoanalysis, mathematics, and so on, as any anthology

of structuralist works will testify (De George & De George, 1972; Ehrmann, 1970; Hawkes, 1977; Kristeva, 1980; Macksey & Donato, 1972).

The related point may be made that different levels of analysis, even within the same field of research, can fruitfully be articulated in the same way. The present account offers only one very specifically limited level of analysis of the experience of homophobia. In any concrete case a great number of considerations other than the ones dealt with here would have to be adduced to provide a full or even satisfactory explanation of homophobia. Individual life-histories, particular psychodynamic configurations in the individual which make for, for example, especially low or high tolerance for gender ambiguities or familial rejection, the greater or lesser threat to occupational security, and a host of other factors will certainly play a part in each particular case of homophobia. But there is only space here to deal systematically with one level of analysis, one of the factors to be taken into account. And only by dealing systematically with one level, and thinking it through in detail to its logical conclusions, can it serve as an elaboration useful in the sense that it can provide a test of the consistency of its own concepts and premises, which can in turn feed in to refine the consistency of other levels of analysis, and which can be rigorously tested by their separate elaborations. This is strictly analogous to the articulation of adjacent theoretical areas discussed above. It is to the degree that limitation and

specificity of focus are maintained, that a theoretical elaboration has useful bearing on other levels and in other areas of analysis.

As Goldmann puts it,

> In order to conduct a scientific study, I must first make distinctions. It is impossible to make an analysis of or to establish a dialectic from a mixture... If I am studying Jansenism...I know very well that each individual Jansenist belongs to numerous other groups; but what interests me, in analysing the Jansenist group is whether what they have in common, in comparison to what separates them, will allow me to understand certain patterns of behaviour which result precisely from the fact that they are together. What we have here is the conceptual necessity to divide our object of study and such a division is indispensable if our work is to be scientific (1972, p.102).

And Pratt clarifies the possibility of making such distinctions:

> A melody is a segregated and independent whole, whereas the notes that go to make up the melody are dependent elements. The same distinction does not apply with equal force, if indeed it applies at all,

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of the human subject insofar as it is relevant to the understanding of homophobia and its resolution, and will attempt to justify that interpretation. Chapter Four will explain the view of ideology being taken,

and especially those of its concepts for which it has been chosen. This will complete what may be considered the introductory section of this thesis.

Chapter Five will elaborate the mechanisms of homophobia, what we may call the gay predicament, by combining the psychoanalytic and ideological poles of explanation. Chapter Six will elaborate on the movement towards acceptance of homosexuality, what is known in the case of the gay individual as the "coming-out" process, in terms of the conceptualisation developed in Chapter Five. Chapter Seven will consist in a comparison of the now-developed theory of the gay predicament and its resolution with existing models, attempting to show how this model contradicts, complements or coincides with others. This will serve to show what immediate contribution it makes, even before research is undertaken on its basis. Finally, Chapter Eight will include concluding comments, such as suggestions of research directions which the present conceptualisation may suggest and make it fruitful to follow.

This arrangement of the contents is covertly unconventional, in that material which belongs in the Introduction and in Chapters Five and Six has been placed in Chapter Seven, where the present analysis is compared with others. This is necessary in view of the complexity of the theoretical framework adopted here. Some aspects of a critique of psychoanalytic approaches,

for example, can only be pursued after Lacan's framework is clear, and hence cannot be placed in this Introduction. And the development of an understanding of homophobia in Chapters Five and Six is sufficiently complex to become intolerable if the support of other complex analyses is adduced at the same time. Thus material which would make the present conceptualisations more convincing or at least apparently more respectworthy, has been left for Chapter Seven, on comparisons with other understandings. Only small studies, which can simply be referred to and so easily incorporated into the text, will be used to support statements in Chapters Five and Six themselves. Chapter Seven, then, is far less an account of other conceptualisations than a commentary on this one.

In view of the complexity and unfamiliarity of Lacan's technical usage of terms familiar from other contexts, such as "imaginary", and "the real", some authoritative definitions of some of his terms will be appended to this thesis for easy reference.

2. SOME LINGUISTIC CONCEPTS

The concepts of post-Saussurean linguistics are fundamental both to Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis and to the approaches to ideology which will be adopted in this thesis. In order to make the exposition of these approaches easier, therefore, some of these concepts will be elucidated in this chapter. In the process of presenting these concepts, it will be argued that language and language-like phenomena organise the world for us, including that part of the world that is ourselves, and that this organisation is capable of change.

2.1 The Nature of the Sign

The linguistics under discussion is grounded in some fundamental definitions and insights of Ferdinand de Saussure. The units of language are analysed, in this approach, into the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the acoustic image, in the case of spoken language, as in the 'sound-pattern /kat/ ark The signified is the concept that is associated with that acoustic image, as in this case is the concept of a cat. (Pettit, 1975, pp.6). The signifier and signified together make up the sign. Saussure compares the relationship of all signifier and signified in a sign to that of two sides of a piece of paper: the one "cannot be conceived of without the other" (ibid.). The methodological distinction in the between the two is useful, however, in that it permits an investigation and understanding of the processes by ... which particular signifiers come to be associated with a particular signifieds. tion, would not be subject to ... evolution" (Culler, op. cit., p.27).

Thus languages "do not simply name existing categories, they articulate their own" (ibid.). That is, languages organise the world for their speakers. We must therefore explain not only how signifiers become linked to signifieds, but also how signifiers acquire a consistent definition at all, given that there are no pre-existing signifieds which can give them their meaning. Saussure's answer is that signifiers are given their definition by their difference from other signifiers, and similarly for signifieds. Red, the signified, for example, is given its definition by its difference from pink, orange, and so on. The signifier "kill" is given its definition by its difference from "kiss", "mill", "cull" and so on. Whereas the Chinese may not perceive the difference in meaning between the words "lick" and "rick", because they cannot distinguish between the sound-patterns of the signifiers. As Saussure puts it:

> in language (langue), in a language state (état de langue) nothing exists but differences. A difference evokes in the mind the idea of the positive terms between which it holds. In language there are differences, nothing but differences, but without positive terms. This is a paradoxical fact (quoted in Percival, 1981, p.23).

The signifier, then, has no positive being of its own: "both signifier and signified are purely relational or differential entities" (Culler, op. cit., p.23). This cannot be sufficiently emphasised:

> the linguistic system being what it is, wherever one begins one will find nothing simple but always and everywhere this same complex equilibrium of reciprocally defined or conditioned terms. In other words, language is a form and not a substance. One cannot steep oneself too deeply in this truth, for all the mistakes in our terminology, all our incorrect ways of designating aspects of language, come from this involuntary assumption that linguistic phenomena must have substance (Saussure, quoted ibid., p.47).

In Lacan's words, "the being of language is the non-being of objects" (1977a, p.263).

A consequence of this relational character of language is that

> Not only does each language produce a different set of signifiers, articulating and dividing the continuum of sound in a distinctive way; each language produces a different set of signifieds; it has a distinctive and thus "arbitrary" way of organizing the world into concepts or categories (Culler, op. cit., p.23).

DIACHRONIC

The analysis of language in terms of the relations between the terms at any given time is known as a synchronic analysis ("study of the linguistic system in a particular state, without reference to time" (ibid., p.35)). This

is distinguished from a study of the historical processes of development of a language, the "study of its evolution in time" (ibid.), which is known as a diachronic analysis.

As Culler argues, there is a "connection between the arbitrary nature of the sign and the profoundly historical nature of language" (ibid.). And he explains:

> if there were some essential or natural connection between signifier and signified, then the sign would have an essential core which would be unaffected by time or which at least would resist change. This unchanging essence could be opposed to those "accidental" features which did alter from one period to another. But in fact, as we have seen, there is no aspect of the sign which is a necessary property and which therefore lies outside time. Any aspect of sound or meaning can alter; the history of languages is full of radical evolutionary alterations of both sound and meaning...Because it is arbitrary, the sign is totally subject to history, and the combination at a particular moment of a given signifier and signified is a contingent result of the historical process (ibid., pp.35-36).

Again, for the purposes of this thesis, this profound historicity of language cannot be overemphasised.

It may be concluded from the above that, not only does language organise or construct the world of its speakers, but that it is the signifier which produces the signified, since there are no pre-existing concepts. As Lacan puts it,

> The thematics of this science is henceforth suspended, in effect, at the primordial position of the signifier and the signified as being distinct orders separated initially...And that is what was to make possible an exact study of the connections proper to the signifier, and of the extent of their function in the genesis of the signified (1977a, p.149).

Of course, "In a sense, the notion of a synchronic state is a methodological fiction" (Culler, op. cit., p.37). For in the case of each language

> We are abstracting from a reality which consists of a very large number of native speakers, whose linguistic systems may differ in various ways. Nevertheless, the linguistic system of French is a definite reality, in that all these speakers understand one another, whereas someone who speaks only English cannot understand them. Since we want to represent this fact and speak of the system which these native speakers have in common, we produce statements about the

> linguistic system in a particular synchronic state (ibid., pp.37-38).

But the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of language, being methodological distinctions, are always present together. "Speech always implies both an established system and an evolution; at every moment it is an existing institution and a product of the past" (Saussure, 1972, p.60).

2.2 Language in Practice

Saussure makes a distinction between language insofar as it is performed and observable, that is when it is actually written in texts or spoken in utterances, and language insofar as it is a linguistic, grammatical system which allows correct or incorrect speech acts to be performed and recognized by others. He calls the former parole, actual speech, and the latter langue, language.

> But what is language (langue)? It is not to be confused with human speech, of which it is only a definite part, though certainly an essential one. It is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty (Saussure, ibid., p.61).

And "Execution is always individual, and the individual is always its master: I shall call the executive side

speaking (parole)" (ibid., p.65). In this thesis, "language" will always be used to refer to both langue and parole, unless it is used in conjunction with or in opposition to "speech", or when specified to refer to langue.

It follows that "Language is the social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community. Moreover, the individual must always serve an apprenticeship in order to learn the functioning of language; a child assimilates it only gradually" (ibid., p.66). But langue has no existence other than in its manifestations in speech: "The nature of the langue lies beyond, and determines, the nature of each manifestation of parole, yet it has no concrete existence of its own, except in the piecemeal manifestations that 'speech affords'" (Hawkes, op. cit., p.21).

When Lacan speaks of language, he refers ultimately to the language commonly spoken by people, from which the Saussurean properties of language are ultimately deduced. Thus when he says "the unconscious is structured as a language...it is not as some special part of language... Language is language and there is only one sort of language; concrete language - English or French for instance - that people talk" (Lacan, 1972b, p.188).

It follows from the preceding section that language as it functions in speech can only produce meaning once differences have been established between its terms. But even once this prerequisite is satisfied, more factors enter into the production of meaning. Firstly, speech and writing take time: "verbal utterance...is forced to deliver its elements in a certain order or sequence which is itself significant" (Hawkes, op. cit., p.25). Thus, the "mode of the relationship between signifier and signified can be said to be essentially, albeit minimally, sequential in nature" (ibid.). "It follows from this that each word will have a linear or 'horizontal' relationship with the words that precede and succeed it, and a good deal of its capacity to 'mean' various things derives from this pattern of positioning" (ibid., p.26). This horizontal unfolding of meaning is known as the syntagmatic aspect of language. It is frequently assimilated to the diachronic aspect, since both essentially involve the passage of time (Hawkes, ibid., p.27; Lemaire, 1977, p.34).

The "horizontal", sequential dimension of language is contrasted with a "vertical" dimension, in which each word in the sentence is given its primary definition by its difference from all the other words which could have replaced it in the sentence. This is clearly the synchronic aspect of language, as discussed above. It is also known as the paradigmatic aspect of language (ibid.). Thus the units of language

> (whatever their inner structure and their extent, quite different according to cases) have no significant existence except by their frontiers: those which separate them from other actual units of the discourse...and also those which distinguish them from other virtual units, with which they form a certain class (which linguists call a paradigm);...in a certain relation of affinity and dissimilarity (Barthes, 1972b, p.151).

The paradigmatic axis, then, is characterised by selection from a class of words which could replace each other in a sentence, as is "shoved", "pushed", "pulled", "stunned", "shunned" and so on in the case of the sentence "I grew angry and shunned him". And the syntagmatic axis is characterised by combinations of words in a sequence. "The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity, while the combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity" (Jakobson, 1972, p.95).

Jakobson further assimilates these "two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behaviour" (ibid.) to the figures of speech, metaphor and metonymy (Hawkes, op. cit., p.77). "Broadly speaking, metaphor is based on a proposed similarity or analogy between the literal subject...

and its metaphorical substitute" (ibid.). This matches selection by equivalence in the paradigmatic axis. And "metonymy is based on a proposed contiguous (or 'sequential') association between the literal subject...and its 'adjacent' replacement" (ibid.). This matches combination by contiguity in the syntagmatic axis.

Lacan makes use of these synonymities in applying linguistic concepts to psychoanalysis, principally by assimilating metaphor and metonymy to condensation and displacement, respectively. "The same structural laws of condensation and displacement...are the laws of the unconscious. These laws are the same as those which create meaning in language" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, op. cit., p.192). And,

> It is a question of rediscovering in the laws that govern that other scene...which Freud... designates as being that of the unconscious, the effects that are discovered at the level... of...language: effects constituted by the double play of combination and substitution in the signifier, according to the two aspects that generate the signified, metonymy and metaphor (Lacan, 1977a, p.285).

There are further precisions of meaning made possible by the socio-historical contexts of speech-acts and texts, which are not purely linguistic in nature. "That which is transmitted cannot be separated from the forms,

the means, and the concrete conditions of the transmission" (Medvedev, quoted in Todorov, 1981, p.174). For "in fact, prior to the speech-act, the speaker and the addressee literally do not exist as such; it is only the discursive process which thus defines them in relation to each other" (Todorov, ibid., p.173). Thus, if I say, "I want you to break that log", many of the words in my utterance are defined only by the concrete circumstances in which I speak.

Furthermore, "No member of the verbal community will ever discover any words in language which are totally neutral, devoid of another's aspirations and evaluations, or free of another's voice...A word reaches one context in terms of another context, penetrated by the intentions of another" (Bakhtin, quoted ibid., p.170).

Thus difference between signs makes meaning possible in language, and concrete contexts - the sentence, the paradigm, the dialoguing interlocutors, the surroundings, the epoch, the existing intonations of the words - develop the precise meaning each text or utterance bears. "From which we can say that it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning 'insists' but that none of its elements 'consists' in the signification of which it is at the moment capable" (Lacan, 1977a, p.153). The whole utterance, that is, and the whole text, or the whole discourse, is responsible for the signification of each element, each signifier; the signifiers on their own are not responsible for their signification. Lacan gives the example of "contract", in: "the expressions: 'marriage contract', 'contract bridge',

'breach of contract', or...the word 'contract' progressively reduced to the articulation of its first syllable: contract, contrac, contra, contr..." (1977a, p.63). All this is contrasted with the word "contract" as a command to contract the pupils of one's eyes.

Because of this contextuality, change in language is easily conceived of, for as new contexts appear and new combinations of interlocutors, so new meanings can emerge.

Given that the sign is defined entirely by its context, purely linguistic and otherwise, and that it is capable of inhabiting any number of contexts, it is possible for a language to contain a number of sub-languages, in each of which the words will carry meanings or significations peculiar to these contexts, in addition to the significations they bear in other contexts. Thus, for example, the meanings of the terms used in the language of natural science will differ to some degree from the meanings of the same terms used in poetry. Furthermore, these differences may show some roughly specifiable pattern. For example, the language of natural science may tend towards the reverse. "No doubt, for any speech community, for any speaker, there exists a unity of language, but this overall code represents a system of interconnected subcodes; each language encompasses several concurrent patterns which are each characterized by a different function" (Jakobson, 1972, p.88). Such subcodes will be called discourses in this thesis. They will be referred

to when the particular characteristics making the pattern peculiar to a discourse distinguishable from other such patterns are of salient interest. For example, "ideological discourse" or "the discourse of ideology" will refer to language insofar as it has the characteristics of ideology.

Lacan gives an idea of the nature and relationships of such discourses: "With the second property of the signifier, that of combining according to the laws of a closed order, is affirmed the necessity of the topological substratum of which the term that I ordinarily use, namely, the signifying chain, gives an approximate idea: rings of a necklace that is a ring in another necklace made of rings" (1977a, p.153).

The concept of bricolage is a helpful one here.

> The process involves a "science of the concrete"...which...orders, classifies and arranges into structures the minutiae of the physical world...The structures, "improvised" or "made-up" (these are rough translations of the process of bricoler) as ad hoc responses to an environment..."explain" the world and make it able to be lived in (Hawkes, op. cit., p.51).

This provides an analogy with the function of language as that which organises our world. And the fact that it is a process suggests that alter-

native organisations are possible, which, together with the concept of a number of such organisational structures making up the bricolage, provides an analogy with what is meant above by "discourse". This is usefully elaborated by the following:

> Together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed (Clarke, quoted in Hebdige, 1979, p.104).

These quotes on bricolage suggest that signs need not be of the nature of the language we speak and write. For "if language is a system of signs, then not only sounds or written texts, but also all meaningful social practices and cultural phenomena may constitute particular signs of language" (Larrain, 1979, p.130). For example, a woman's wearing or not wearing make-up has a significance in Western cultures, as will a man's eating supper at a Wimpy bar as opposed to at home or at a steakhouse. The same conditions for the possibility of meaning apply to non-verbal signs as to verbal.

Thus the questions may be asked which extend the field of linguistics to the field of semiology or semiotics,

> of the first governs the pathways of the second (1977a, p.126).

2.3 Some Implications of the Foregoing

Language not only organises or constructs the world of the speaker; it also organises the very concept of speaker or subject of the sentence. For the word "I" is defined by its difference from equivalent terms and by its context, as is any other word. And the subject will be referred to with other words by him/herself and others, as well as by certain styles of speaking, writing, dressing, behaving and being responded to or related to, all of which will characterise the person in a certain roughly consistent way. When the designation of the subject by "I" is referred to in this thesis, all these other means of referring to or characterising the subject will be taken as understood.

And it may be emphasised that language organises the world not simply because it is organising by nature, but also because it gives meaning and significance, so that it is only through language that it is possible for the world to have organisation at all. "As well as being a system of signs related among themselves, language incarnates meaning in the form of the series of positions it offers for the subject from which to grasp itself and its relations with the real" (Nowell-Smith, quoted in Belsey, 1980, p.61).

Another implication of the preceding pages is that language pre-exists the individual, who enters into an organisation of the world entirely independent of her/his

needs or motives. For "the arbitrary nature of the sign explains...why the social fact alone can create a linguistic system. The community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely to usage and general acceptance are to be set up" (Saussure, quoted in Belsey, op. cit., p.41). And such a conventional system, language, clearly is already existent by the time the contemporary individual, and most of his/her predecessors, are born. That which organises his/her world, therefore, does so in ways established before his/her particular needs and contributions existed to be taken into consideration.

Hence Lacan can say (what will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter):

> Needs become subordinated to the same conventional conditions as those of the signifier in its double register: the synchronic register of opposition between irreducible elements, and the diachronic register of substitution and combination, through which language, even if it does not fulfil all functions, structures everything concerning relations between human beings (1977a, p.255).

And he can speak of the entry into language as that which "not only suspends the satisfaction of needs from the signifying apparatus, but also that which frangments them, filters them, models them upon the defiles of the structure of the signifier" (ibid.).

It follows from the distinction between langue and parole that there is a tension between the social, general aspect of language and the individual, particular aspect of language. As argued above in this section, the individual enters a language which pre-exists her/him. But since selection and change is possible in view of the dialogical and contextual nature of language, the individual can develop a parole of her/his own. But the tension between the individual and the general will always be present, since the same words belong to both. Peirce's concept of "generals" may clarify this:

> a test for something's being a general is whether it is repeatable as opposed to being a unique individual. It is fairly obvious that words of a human language are repeatable, that the very same word can be spoken or written many times (Skidmore, 1981, p.45).

Thus Todorov can say, "the authorities fight the diversity of discourse by aspiring to a common language (or rather idiom)" (op. cit., p.176).

And Lacan can speak of the goal of analysis as being to speak "full speech" as opposed to "empty speech". He speaks of a developmental stage "in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form...and (later) language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" (1977a, p.2, insertion added). He goes on, "But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional

direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being...of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality" (ibid.). And he states that "the antinomy immanent in the relations between speech and language becomes clear. As language becomes more functional, it becomes improper for speech, and as it becomes too particular to us, it loses its function as language" (ibid., p.85). Finally, he speaks of the

> true subject, that is, the subject of the unconscious...in the Language of his symptoms which, although it is in a sense deciphered by the analyst, is more a process of the subject's coming around to address himself to him in a more and more consistent way... What the subject who is speaking says, however empty his discourse may be at first, takes on its effect from the process of approaching to the Word which is realized in his discourse, a coming closer to the Word into which he will fully convert the Truth which his symptoms express (that is, the parole vide will become a parole pleine) (quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.142, Wilden's insertion).

The point of the above quote will be clearer if it is

borne in mind that "the Word" is an alternative translation of parole, so that it should be read as "speech" to make it consistent with the earlier citings of Lacan and comments on them. Parole vide, and parole pleine, have been translated as "empty speech" and "full speech" respectively.

This link with Lacan, which will be taken up in Chapter Six, suggests further points of contact between psychoanalysis and linguistics. Firstly, the process of change of language referred to earlier is given an added dimension by the degree to which psychoanalysis shows the individual to be capable of reworking language. It shows this to be possible to a radical extent, in that the processes at work in the unconscious, displacement and condensation, are the equivalent respectively of metonymy and metaphor, but do not require the conventions of meaning to effect their substitutions and combinations. Thus the German for a "shine" on the nose can come to be unconsciously equated with the visibility of a nose, for the entirely adventitious reason that the English "glance" and the German "Glanz" (shine) are homophonous, so that "shine", through this purely external connection in sound, can replace "possible to be glanced at" in meaning. Thus changes can occur beyond the constraints of meaning.

Secondly, the individual, therefore, by the operation of the unconscious as revealed by psychoanalysis, is "different, irreducible, for one is borne by a simply singular speech, not merging with the others, but then exposed to the black thrusts of a desire that borders

will be necessary to clarify and use Wittgenstein's emphasis on use of a word in temporary preference to Saussure's emphasis on difference. It is therefore useful to note that the two approaches are complementary.

At the level of speech-acts and sentences, meaning may be taken "in the sense that in performing them people intend to communicate certain things" (ibid., p.34). Ultimately, however, this is dependent on the meaning established for words by difference. Difference remains the precondition for further factors to make a contribution. For "Saussure is talking...about the conditions of meaning as meaning operates immanently and unconsciously within the discourse" (Wilden, op. cit., p.214).

3. LACAN'S VIEW ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SUBJECT

Lacan's endeavour can be described from a number of different viewpoints: purely psychoanalytic, philosophical, scientific, linguistic, and more. For the present purposes two ways of seeing his contribution stand out.

Firstly, he may be seen as attempting to establish psychoanalysis as a science, using only concepts proper to its own object of study, which is the unconscious (Freud, 1923). To this end he rejects Freud's use of an energic model of the human constitution, and replaces it with a linguistic one. This is appropriate to psychoanalysis, for, as Freud points out when speaking of the analyst and patient, "Nothing takes place between them except that they talk to each other" (1926, p.187). The effects of the unconscious which allow the analyst to infer or construct the unconscious formations and dynamics are usefully found, it may be argued, only in language, in the communication between patient and analyst, for example in slips of the tongue and the dream text related by the patient. Thus, through linguistics, Lacan integrates the object of psychoanalytic science with its methodology, so that the findings of psychoanalysis are obtained in an epistemologically rigorous way.

Secondly, Lacan may be seen as attempting to explain the passage of a human being from a speechless (literally "infant") condition, to a condition in which it can speak and enter into all the symbolically mediated activities and exchanges of human society. He can do this because

the disruptive or bewildering human phenomena on which psychoanalysis works, dreams, jokes, parapraxes and neurotic and psychotic symptoms, suggest for their explanation infantile experiences which still live on unconsciously and produce these disruptions. Such unconscious formations cannot be studied directly. They can only be studied via their effects on conscious discourse, as suggested above in outlining the first view of Lacan's endeavour. They are thus inevitably theoretical constructs, the truth of their existence assessed solely on the coherence of the explanation they provide of what is observed (Freud, 1937b).

Lacan's linguistic emphasis allows him to determine the points at which the theoretically constructed unconscious formations may no longer be meaningfully spoken about in a scientific context. The reason for this is that language is necessary for meaning to be possible. Infants are incapable of using language, except in an inconsistent way, the systematic relation of which to our language is impossible to establish. Thus we can never know with certainty what their experiences are. And when, ultimately, they are in a position to recount their experiences to us, if only in retrospect, their experiences are already mediated by language, a system of symbols which re-organises these experiences according to its own laws. These laws impose a meaning on the infantile experiences which is not inherent in them, but comes to an indeterminate degree from the synchronous manner of working of the language itself.

The Lacanian account of infantile development is → therefore to a very large degree a kind of myth, rather than rigorously scientific. But it serves to make the effects studied in the analytic session intelligible, and to assist an understanding of the nature of the speaking human subject.

Lacan's concern to explain the acquisition of speech in individuals is far from arbitrarily connected with his language-based epistemological premises. For the subject-matter of psychoanalysis, as well as the means of investigating it, are the discourse of the patient in the analytic session. Thus, as the patient's history emerges, the aspect of it with which the analyst will come into the most direct contact, which will require the least inference and theoretical construction to be uncovered, is the patient's changing relation to language. For it is in the form of the patient's speech that the patient's history is revealed to the analyst. The patient's history is already embodied in the material with which the analyst must work.

Thus Lacan produces an epistemology and theory which are pre-eminently suited to the psychoanalytic method of making intelligible the human subject's developing relation to language, and hence his/her relation to the symbolic structures of the relevant social formation. Both his epistemology and his theory of the constitution of the subject will be discussed at length in this chapter.

This combination of two views of Lacan's contribution

may be summarised by saying that his epistemology dictates his ontology, within a scientific context. For his epistemology dictates that only that which may be spoken about or "languaged" is meaningful and hence has a place in scientific discourse. Thus science may only speak of the being of the human subject insofar as she/he speaks. And this, through a process which will be argued in this chapter, leads Lacan to maintain that the subject has the being of a linguistic unit, the signifier, as far as science is concerned.

The account of Lacan given below will consider only a fraction of what Lacan has to say. Detailed considerations of the relation of his work to areas not directly of concern here may be found in Lemaire (1977) on his relation to structuralism, Stewart (1980) on his relation to hermeneutics and phenomenology, Coward and Ellis (1977) on his relation to linguistics, ideology and the theory of subjectivity, and Wilden (1968), on his relation to contemporary philosophical trends.

This chapter is concerned only with limited aspects of Lacan's theory of how the human subject in general is formed as a subject, and with certain implications of that theory for the nature of the subject once it is constituted. Clearly, this account, even though of such limited aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis, must inevitably be only one of a number of possible interpretations of Lacan's ambiguous and complex statements. But the support adduced from Lacan's texts should make it a convincing one.

In any event, the validity of this interpretation of Lacan will lie in a large measure on the intelligibility it brings to the phenomena of homophobia on which it is brought to bear in this thesis, and in its own internal consistency. Such an assertion is in accord not only with a structuralist and semiotic approach to science, but also with the psychoanalytic methodology itself. As Freud said, anticipating structuralism in this as in so much else, "The value of a 'fiction' of this kind...depends on how much one can achieve with its help" (1926, p.194). Whether the ensuing account is "truly Lacanian" or not, then, is beside the point.

This chapter will argue that the subject can be meaningfully thought of only in terms such as may be applied to the units of which language is composed. It will further be argued that the overwhelming desire of the human subject is, paradoxically, to think of itself in ways antithetical to this. Finally, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that an implication of the foregoing is that the subject becomes deeply committed to the social structures embodied in language, before it is in a position to be circumspect about making potentially unsalutary commitments.

Lacan sees the resolution of the Oedipus complex as that which makes the infant a speaking subject. This chapter will therefore be organised to describe pertinent aspects of Lacan's re-construction of pre-Oedipal life, how this

is disrupted by the Oedipal complex, and how the complex is resolved to make the child a speaking subject, a participant in the human world mediated by symbolic relations. Some implications of this resolution will then be drawn.

3.1 The Mirror Stage

Lacan, like Freud before him, constructs his theory to make sense of the facts produced by the psychoanalytic method. "Facts" should be understood here as findings which may be repeated by applying the rules and principles of the psychoanalytic method. They are not simply detected or revealed, but, as suggested in the Introduction (section 1.7), they are actively produced in accordance with theoretical criteria of what makes valid research and interpretation of phenomena. Whether they are facts by the rules of other methodologies, such as that of neo-positivism, is therefore irrelevant. Lacan, then, is concerned to make sense of a number of facts about infantile life produced in the analytic session, in conjunction with a number of observations of the behaviour of infants.

The facts produced in analysis include phantasies of the body as dismembered or fragmented,[1] of castration, of

1. "Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist...feet which dance by themselves...all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove capable of independent activity in addition" (Freud 1919a, p.244).

being the phallus, of the parents' perfection, and of their terrible aggressive or seductive qualities. The observations include the infant's apparent excited fascination upon glimpsing its own image in a mirror at a time after its sixth month, its successful imitation of its peers before it is sufficiently well co-ordinated to perform the same movements spontaneously, and its apparent identification with its peers, crying when another child falls, for example.

Lacan weaves his theory around these data, integrating it with the account already developed by psychoanalysis. This section will consist in a description of aspects of infantile life and development as reconstructed by Lacan.

Initially, according to Lacan, the infant seems to experience itself as a play of disjointed sensations and as a set of body-fragments that have no consistent relation to one another. He speaks, for exmaple, of phantasies of "a fragmented body-image" which may "appear in the form of disjointed limbs" (1977a, p.4). Between about the sixth and eighteenth month of life, the infant appears to become aware of the unity of its body. It can do so, however, only through its perception of the bodies of others since it cannot see its own body in toto. These other bodies include those of other infants of approximately its own age, that of its mother, and the image of its own body reflected in a mirror.

But it has as yet no means of distinguishing between itself and the world of objects external to itself.

This is a differentiation which has to be learnt. It consequently cannot be thought to make a distinction as yet as to whether the unified body-image it perceives is that of others or its own. Analytic experience "shows us that experience of oneself in the earliest stage of childhood develops, insofar as it refers to one's counterpart, from a situation experienced as undifferentiated. Thus about the age of eight months, we see...those gestures... by which a subject reconstructs the imperfect effort of the other's gesture...that are all the more remarkable in that they precede the complete co-ordination of the motor apparatuses that they bring into play" (Lacan, 1977a, p.18).

Furthermore, it may be thought to be powerfully motivated to acquire such unity of being as the body-image displays. For its fragmented body and arbitrary sensations must be deeply distressing to it. Needs appear with no context or experience of effective action to mediate them and give them some meaning of temporariness, so that they must be experienced as absolute absence of satisfaction, absolute lack. Lacan speaks of "a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor unco-ordination of the neo-natal months" (1977a, p.4). And he mentions, "the confrontation of the subject with an absence of object, with a lack of being in which he is stuck or caught, in which he loses himself and to which anything is preferable" (quoted in Wilden, 1968, pp.150-151).

The infant therefore identifies, as seems to be observable, with the unified body-image it experiences in those who we would see as others. The "specular image...is linked as a unifier to all the...elements of what is called the fragmented body" (Lacan, 1977a, p.196). It may be considered to assume the image as its own both because it cannot properly distinguish between itself and others so that such identification is simply a fact of life for it, and because it is motivated to do so. This occurs with all the motivation of its distress at the absolute arbitrarily descending lack it experiences. The motivation becomes significant when, later, a sense of the infant's separateness begins to creep into its world. This identification is the beginning of the ego in Lacan's understanding.

> We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image... This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infans stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject (1977a, p.2).

Lacan calls this period when the process of assuming a unified image occurs the mirror stage. It is characterized, as suggested above, by lack of differentiation between self and not-self, and therefore by unmediated undifferentiated relating to what we would see as other than the self. Lacan also calls this a dual relationship, for reasons which will become clear later.

Because the infant is seen as unable to distinguish between the image and what it is an image of, this type of relating to the world is called by Lacan the imaginary (or the imaginary register). In the imaginary the image is treated as the thing of which it is the image. "The whole drama of the dual relationship is played out here: consciousness collapses into its double (the other) without keeping its distance from it" (Lemaire, 1977, p.81, insertion added). This precedes the "moment of the separation of the gratifying object from the sign" (ibid., p.165). "The imaginary relationship which has...been assimilated to a dual relationship is specified by the absence of mediation between the self and the thing, the self and the object of desire, or the self and the idea" (ibid., p.227). This will contrast with the type of relating to the world which is seen by Lacan as characteristic of language-speakers, which he calls the symbolic. In the symbolic the subject grasps that which represents something else, that is, the signifier, as distinct from that which it represents, that is, the signified.

Lacan infers that the infant gradually comes to have another exceedingly powerful motivation for wanting to be a unified

being. His reasoning is as follows. The most constant image, and the only necessary one, that enters its world, is that of the mother. Her presence involves satiety of need, repletion. And there is the same lack of differentiation between self and other here as discussed above, and the same motivation of distress to be escaped, so that the infant identifies with the mother, experiencing only one being in what we would see as the two of them. But the infant gradually, with the increasing refinement of its perceptual abilities, comes to an awareness that the mother is not entirely one with it. The infant cannot any longer unequivocally experience the mother and itself as a unity. There can no longer be an immediate experience of unity upon the mother's entering into the infant's field of perception, because other experiences, which are beginning to have durable effects on the infant, contradict that experience of unity.

The infant is therefore becoming capable of <u>desiring</u> unity with the mother, not only of immediately achieving it by imaginary identification. That is to say, once it has begun to have a lasting awareness of a gap between itself and its mother, it can be motivated to unify with her not only by a need to escape distress, but also by a lasting wish, drive or desire to bridge the gap and unify with the bringer of repletion. Insofar as the experiences of separateness from the mother are always present, having made a durable impression on the infant, the experience of the gap will be present, and so will the desire to bridge it.

Given the power of the infant's motivations, almost all the difference between absolute repletion and absolute lack, that desire becomes an exceedingly powerful motivation for wanting to be a unified being with the mother.

Although as Lacan construes it, a separation between the mother and self has begun to seep into the infant's world, the child must still be seen as relating almost entirely in the imaginary register. This is unquestionable, for reasons which will become evident in the next section. Consequently the infant must still be in a world in which imaginary unity, the dual unmediated mirror-relationship of which there was formerly no question at all, is possible. But now, with the seeping in of the gap, for the infant to perceive such a relationship still to be, it follows that the mother must collude with the infant, so that the threatening separation can be ruled out, obliterated - foreclosed, Lacan would say. She must not make her separateness evident. And to ensure this, she must therefore desire the infant as it desires her. Lacan maintains, therefore, that the infant, still in the grip of the imaginary, desires the mother's desire. That is, it desires to be recognised by the mother as the exclusive object of her desire. In consequence, it desires to be that object, so that she might recognise it as such. "Desire is the desire for desire, the desire of the Other" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, ibid., p.164). This is because "the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other" (Lacan, 1977a, p.58).

We have now reached the point where we can assert that, in the present view, the infant in the imaginary desires to be a unified, consistent being, an object. It is this desire "which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things'" (ibid., p.17). It is seen to desire this with all the motivation of its distress as being confronted by its needs with absolute lack, and with all the motivation of the satiety, repletion, which its mother brings.

It may be added at this point that the object of the mother's desire is the phallus. A fairly lengthy digression is necessary to explain this.

Since the mother may be assumed to have gone through the same infantile development as her child's, now under discussion, her desire must be understood to share the same original motivations as the child's. The idea that she too is unconsciously confronted by this lack, or "want-to-be", as Lacan puts it, allows him to speak of "the mother's want-to-be, to which of course she was herself introduced" (1977a, p.207). This will be substantiated in the course of this chapter. Consequently she, too, wishes at a very fundamental level that the lack with which she is confronted by her needs be filled, made replete. Desire, in whom-ever it is found, is still "desire for desire, the desire of the Other... Desire reproduces the subject's relation to the lost object" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, ibid., p.164).

The object which phantasies indicate to suggest itself as likely to be the most successful negator of such a lack, is the penis. This is so for two types of reason. Firstly, the penis physically swells to fill empty space, so that it physically represents or, that signifies the negation of lack.

It should be pointed out that, although the infant cannot yet use language, this form of signification, in which the immediate experience of the representing thing or event evokes the immediate experience of the represented thing or event, may be assumed to be already accessible to the infant.

Secondly, the structure of most, if not all, of the cultures which have been psychoanalytically studied is such that the male is the corner-stone of the culture, his interests dominate its laws and norms. He consequently has, more than anyone or anything else, the means of providing whatever fulfilment of desire is to be had. And his distinguishing mark is the penis, which therefore is again the most likely signifier of the negation of lack. This type of signification is not yet accessible to the infant, but it is to the mother, who has entered the symbolic register, which entry will be explained in the next section.

To make this more precise, it should be noted that the function of the penis as primary signifier is distinct from its function in other ways. In particular, it is

There is some controversy over this last assertion, that such a different social structure could exist (Mitchell, 1975; Coward, Lipshitz & Cowie, 1976). This debate will not be entered into here. It is not relevant to this thesis since the first reason given above is sufficient to establish the distinction between penis and phallus.

To conclude this digressive argument, then, and to return to the main line of thought, the object of the mother's desire is thought to be that which signifies an absence of lack, and that is the phallus. The object which the infant wishes to be, therefore, must also be the phallus, insofar as it wishes to be the object of its mother's desire. Or, more accurately, the infant probably gradually learns to accommodate itself, shape itself, to be what the mother desires, and insofar as it does so successfully, it must inevitably come closer and closer to shaping itself in the mould of the phallus, since she will indicate to it, despite herself, what she desires. For, "in the reduplication of the subject of speech...the unconscious finds the means to articulate itself" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.95). Again, in Lacan's words, "the child, in his relation to the mother, a relation constituted in analysis...by his dependence on her love, that is to say, by the desire for her desire, identifies himself with the imaginary object of this desire insofar as the mother herself symbolizes it in the phallus" (1977a, p.198).

Of course, in this view, the presence on the child's body of the penis or clitoris, which represent the phallus, then becomes of inestimable importance to the child in helping it become recognised as the phallus by its mother. This makes the threat of castration, should it occur, a terrible one, as will be discussed in the next section.

It is difficult, as mentioned at the start of the chapter, to make meaningful assertions about the infant's way of relating, since insofar as it uses language, the language which it uses is very primitive, and has an uncertain relation to the language we use. It must be understood in this way for reasons which will emerge in the next section. As Lemaire puts it, "We are...obliged to admit to a certain inability to specify the relations between these two languages" (p.101). The question of what is meant by saying that the infant interprets something, or perceives something as meaning something else, is therefore extremely problematic.

For the moment it will suffice to say, however, that for the purposes of this thesis, only a few of the assertions so far made in this chapter are of importance. These are the assertions that the infant desires to be the object of its mother's desire and hence to have the permanent characteristics of an object; that it desires this in order to negate its lack; and that it can set about its aims because it relates to the world in ways enumerated above as characteristic of the imaginery. These assertions are supported by psychoanalytic experience.

And all this is in keeping with Lacan's epistemology. For the material worked with in the analytic session is the patient's speech. And the psychoanalytic rules for producing the facts relate to what is done with the subject's speech in analysis.[2] And, finally, the linguistic theory Lacan adduces originates specifically in an application to speech and language. Thus the science of Lacanian psychoanalysis uses only concepts proper to its own object of study, the unconscious of the subject who speaks in analysis.

Lacan's explanation of the transition from infantile life to the life of a properly speaking subject will be outlined in this section.

Although, in Lacan's view, the infant can relate to the mother in an immediate undifferentiation from her, thus living as though its desire for repletion were fulfilled, it is not alone in desiring primary possession of the mother's affections. The father, argues Lacan, is a third element in the mother-child relationship, and he forces his presence upon them in a variety of ways. Firstly, he takes the mother from the infant for a great proportion of the time. Secondly, he gets to sleep with the mother and is never excluded from her bed, as the infant usually or frequently is. Thirdly, the mother's desire is clearly to a great extent for him.

2. "the interpretations made by psychoanalysis are first and foremost translations from an alien method of expression into the one which is familiar to us. When we interpret a dream we are simply translating a particular thought-content (the latent dream-thoughts) from the 'language of dreams' into our waking speech" (Freud, 1913, p.176).

As Lacan sees it, this intervention of the father's at first poses him simply as a rival in the infant's eyes. Against his claims, the infant can assert and live out its own being as that which fulfils the mother's desire, completes her lack, and is, in short, the necessary complement of her being.

This imaginary way of life, however, is rudely interrupted by the threat of castration. This may be argued as follows: The infant masturbates in association with images of its heart's desire, the mother. It also values highly the organ it stimulates, penis or clitoris, as this is the most likely signifier of the negation of lack desired by the mother. It is reprimanded for this self-stimulation, and cannot help but associate that reprimand with the two most salient aspects of its activity, its phantasy and the significance as phallus of the organ it was stimulating. When it perceives that the mother is lacking a penis, given that she is the most developed form of little girls, who also lack all but rudimentary penises, the possibility of being punished for its self-stimulation by losing the most salient aspect of it, the precious organ, becomes for the infant a reality. Castration, it may be emphasized, must be the most terrifying possibility, for it would deprive the infant of the means to attaining its most powerful desire, to be the object of the mother's desire, the phallus, which is represented on the body by the penis.

> It can be said that this signifier is chosen because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent there to the (logical) copula. It might also be said that, by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation (Lacan, 1977a, p.287).

And so in the psychoanalytic view, in consequent terror of castration, the infant usually fends off or repudiates the phantasy of union with the mother, for which phantasy it is understood to perceive itself as repeatedly reprimanded. It represses this phantasy or image of union and being the phallus, placing a barrier between the phantasy and its own consciousness. In Lacan's words, "the urverdrängt (primally repressed) finds its signifier by receiving the mark of the Verdrängung (repression) of the phallus" (ibid., p.288).

But the infant, the argument goes, has not done away with its overruling desire for completion through the mother's desire. This still lives on unconsciously. Indeed, it is made all the more permanent by virtue of its being unconscious, since it is no longer susceptible to reality testing. But the child is now impelled to find a means of gaining this object, desire for which still and forever dominates its motives, without its own terrified conscious detecting it.

The male child is seen to do so by identifying with the father. In this way it compromises by learning to wait for someone like the mother, instead of the mother herself, and by learning to be like him who has the phallus, instead of learning (impossibly) to be the phallus. "In the quest for the phallus, the subject moved from being it to having it" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.95).

The process through which the female child goes is rather more complex to account for than the male child's (Freud, 1924, 1933). But the end result, as far as it is relevant here, is the same. In Lacan's words, "the clinical facts...reveal a relation of the subject to the phallus that is established without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes, and which, by this very fact, makes any interpretation of this relation especially difficult in the case of women" (1977a, p.282). Because of this complexity, only the male example of the Oedipal resolution will be given here, to avoid making the argument of this chapter more complicated than it already is. This will not injure the aim of reaching general conclusions about the nature or being of the human subject.

These, however, are the child's more conscious motivations. In the depths of its unconscious the original desire, uncompromising, is seen by psychoanalysis still to act, albeit through the distant representation of the

compromising conscious derivatives of it.[3] This will be elaborated at several points in the rest of this chapter.

This process is of course the transition through the Oedipus complex (or simply the Oedipus, as Lacan calls it), and there is an all-important corollary of it. This is the entry into speaking language. Lacan reconstructs this as follows:

The child has been impelled by the castration-terror to make a radical separation between itself and the mother. It is therefore no longer in the imaginary register in a predominant way, but relates to the most important parts of its world in a manner which distinguishes between self and non-self.

There is a further complexity to this, owing to the persistence of the original operation of desire in the unconscious. The child's desire, persisting as it does, does not permit the real abandonment of the mother by the child. It does not permit, that is, the child to assert an unequivocal separation. This is implicit in the fact that the child is motivated to identify with the father because it is motivated not to lose its original object of desire. Consequently it may be said that the child has taken the identification with the father as its

3. "The ego is not in a position to exterminate these unsubdued mental powers, but it turns its back on them, lets them remain at the lowest psychological level, defends itself from their demands by the energetic erection of protective and antithetical barriers or seeks to come to terms with them by means of substitutive satisfactions" (Freud, 1919b, p.260).

immediate desire, but that this desire has simultaneously the unconscious meaning of a circuitous route to the mother's desire. The identification with the father may therefore be said to stand for the mother's desire as far as the infant's desire is concerned.

To digress momentarily in order to put this more precisely, the identification with the father is not understood as becoming a duplicate of him. Presumably only certain of his characteristics have significance for the child, and the outstanding one of these must be thought to be his claim to possess the phallus which is desired by the mother. The child therefore desires to be like the father insofar as he has the phallus. And that is not the father as he really is. No one possesses that which can complete another's lack, and which is signified by the phallus. But the father does, in this view, represent to the child whoever may possess the phallus, because, it is thought, his relationship to the mother brings him closest to it in the child's eyes. So the child desires to identify with the father insofar as he signifies him who possesses the phallus.

The child is as yet presumably incapable of making this distinction, and that does not affect the process under discussion. But it is an important distinction in our speaking about this process.

Lacan calls this signifying function of the father "the Name-of-the-Father", distinguishing it from the real father. Thus the penis is at the disposal of the father, while the phallus is said to be disposed of in the Name-of-the-Father.

To take up the thread of the argument, then, the Name-of-the-Father, rather than the real father, may be said to stand for the mother's desire as far as the infant's desire is concerned.

> The phantasy of the primal scene is the imprint, as it were, upon which the Oedipus will be structured. Precipitated into the unconscious by primal repression, this phantasy can be named by the Name-of-the-Father, as it is none other than the phantasy of the desire of the mother (Stein, quoted in Lemaire, ibid., p.89).

Thus the child has learnt to substitute one term for another, and to make it signify the other for the first time in a durable or consistent way, as signifier bound to signified.

Furthermore, as Lacan construes it, the mother's desire, in turn, may be said to stand for the phallus for the infant. This too is now fixed in the unconscious. The child may therefore be said to have created a triple-layered substitution: Name-of-the-Father stands for mother's desire stands for phallus. The mother's desire has been elided from this chain by its repression in reaction to the castration terror. Consequently the Name-of-the-Father now stands for or signifies the phallus. The Name-of-the-Father has replaced the mother's desire as a signifier of the phallus, or, more accurately, has elided it: the mother's desire is present as a link, but cannot be noticed as present.

The child has therefore created a metaphor. In Lacan's words, "the metaphor of the Name-of-the-Father... substitutes this Name in the place first symbolized by the operation of the absence of the mother" (1977a, p.200). This is not strictly speaking the child's action: the metaphor has been created willy-nilly by the child's desire, as the only way of preserving its object and aim while avoiding the castration attendant upon that preservation of object. In Lemaire's summary, "Through the paternal metaphor, the child names his desire and renounces it. His true desire and the multiple phantasmatic forms it took are pushed back into the unconscious. This is the primal repression...which substitutes a symbol and a Law for the Real of existence" (Lemaire, ibid., p.87). The use of "the Real" in the preceding quotation should be clarified here: for Lacan, "the Real is not synonymous with external reality, but rather with what is real for the subject" (Wilden, 1968, p.161).

An additional point is that, as discussed above, the child is seen to have learnt to relate to a world of objects separate from itself. That is to say, it has learnt to name objects and identify them by their difference from each other. The combination of this ability to oppose things to each other and define them by their difference from each other, and of the ability to operate metaphorically, is the basis of an ability to use language, as suggested in Chapter Two. "This...primal repression...determines access to language" (Lemaire, p.87). The child can therefore be said to have entered into language; it is no longer an infant. It is now in a position to name itself as 'I' in

opposition to the other pronouns and proper names, each of these being separate from itself and from each other. This, in this view, is a momentous event with far-reaching implications for the nature of this human being.

It is crucial to note that in terms of Lacan's account it is not the child that has acted here so much as the child's desire, and the intervention of the father. For the child has been radically divided into conscious and unconscious, and the meanings of its actions and the objects of its actions are completely distinct in the two realms. What has brought this about is the operation of desire: what we speak of as the child has been constructed by that operation. The child has been created by the creation of the paternal metaphor. Thus Lacan can speak of "the split (Spaltung) which the subject undergoes by virtue of being a subject only insofar as he speaks" (1977a, p.269). There was, indeed, no such being as a human child before that metaphor eventuated, and consequently it cannot be said to have created the metaphor. "The moment in which desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into language" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.168). And, "It is by being named in the father-mother dialogue that the subject becomes 'he'" (Miller, quoted in Lemaire, p.70).

Furthermore, desire itself, as it is found in psychoanalysis, is only fully brought about in this entry into language. "Desire is an effect in the subject of the

condition that is imposed on him by the existence of the discourse, to make his need pass through the defiles of the signifier" (Lacan, 1977a, p.264). For one can only desire something to the extent that it is not oneself. And radical separation of self and other, as opposed to mere hints of separation dominated by imaginary identification or unity, can only be conceived of, in this theory, upon entry into language, which is the same as passing through the Oedipus. As Lacan puts it, it is then that "desire in the subject must pass through the defiles of the signifier" (quoted in Lemaire, p.170). This is a very simplistic account of the emergence of desire, but the elaboration of its emergence is irrelevant to this thesis.

The subject, as we shall henceforth call the subject of desire, has now entered into a new way of relating to the world. Lacan calls this the symbolic register, as opposed to the imaginary register, since it is characterised as Lacan identifies it, by the use of symbols, notably in language. Because there is a differentiation between self and non-self, and between objects, in this register, the relations in it are mediate, that is, involving mediating distances between objects, as opposed to the immediate relating of the imaginary described earlier. And it is no longer a dual mode of relating, but a triadic one, since a third term, most importantly and primally the father, has intervened in the relation of the child to its

objects (of which the most important is the mother).[4]

> By internalizing the Law, the child identifies with the father and takes him as a model. The Law now becomes a liberating force: for, once separated from the mother, the child can dispose of himself. He becomes conscious that he is still in the making and, turning towards the future, integrates himself into the social, into Culture, and re-enters into language (Vergote, quoted in Lemaire, p.84).

4, In 1924 Freud issued a circular to his "Committee" of trusted followers, in which he suggested an interpretation of the controversial work of Rank and Ferenczi which bears a remarkable similarity to elements of Lacan's contribution. "Some instinct must be associated with the birth trauma which aims at restoring the previous existence. One might call it the instinctual need for happiness, understanding there that the concept 'happiness' is mostly used in an erotic sense. Rank now goes further than psychopathology and shows how men alter the outer world in the service of this instinct, whereas neurotics have (sic) themselves this trouble by taking the short cut of phantasying a return to the womb. If one adds to Rank's conception the one of Ferenczi, that a man can be represented by his genital, then for the first time→ we get a derivation of the normal sexual instinct which falls into place with our conception of the world.

Now comes the point where I find the difficulties begin. Obstacles, which evoke anxiety, the barriers against incest, are opposed to the phantastic return to the womb: now where do these come from? Their representative is evidently the father, reality, the authority which does not permit incest" (quoted in Jones, 1961, p.526, insertion added).

3.3 The Problem of Meaning in Speaking of the Subject

One valuable aspect of Lacan's approach is that it takes into account the epistemological problems in investigating through the medium of language entities who themselves operate through that medium. By taking these problems into account Lacan arrives at far-reaching conclusions. A rudimentary argument leading to his conclusions will be outlined below, and his statements will follow. Some important implications drawn out by Lacan from this, in his theorising of the constitution of the subject, will then be argued.

It was mentioned at the end of the first section of this chapter that it is very difficult to speak about the experiences and reactions of the infant which cannot yet speak. In fact it is impossible to speak about these things except in a very indirect way, even a mythic way. This is so because meaning itself only exists once language exists. There can for example be no such thing as a true statement or a false one until there is such a thing as a statement. And, similarly, there cannot be a meaning of a proposition until there is such a thing as a proposition. This is not to say that language occurs first, preceding meaning which occurs after. It is simply to say that meaning is not conceivable without language.

It may be argued that there can be meaningful experiences before they can be articulated or before their meaning can be expressed in signs. There are two important objections to this.

Firstly, the "meaning" which such experiences would bear would not be the "meaning" which is meant by language-speakers' use of the word. The "meaning" language-speakers mean is given by common experience in the use of words or signs. Given such commonly understood usages, there are criteria for distinguishing between what is meaningful and what is meaningless. And, of course, the step of deciding whether a statement is true or false cannot be taken until it can be established whether that statement is meaningful or not. (An example, which may be helpful, of a meaningless statement which is nevertheless grammatically sound is Chomsky's "colourless green ideas sleep furiously" (cited in Pettit, 1975, p.102). The truth or falsity of this statement cannot conceivably be discussed). The "meaning" of "meaningful experiences which cannot be expressed in signs" is not of this type just discussed above. For it does not rely on criteria given by common usage of language, simply because it is by definition not capable of expression in language. Furthermore, we can have no way of establishing what relation if any that "meaning" has to the "meaning" meant by language-speakers. For to establish the nature of such a relationship, which we would have to do by using language, also requires the potential use of language-speakers' criteria of meaningfulness, which are again inapplicable to non-languagable experiences.

Thus we have no means of knowing what we are talking about when we speak of "meaningful experiences which cannot be expressed in signs". Whether they exist or not is therefore beside the point: we can make no use of such a statement in any context where its truth or falsity or the truth or falsity of its implications are of interest. That is, we cannot use it in a scientific or any discursive context.

The second, and related objection, is that it follows from the above argument that the one who undergoes such "meaningful" but unlanguagable experiences, cannot her/himself experience them as meaningful in the sense given to meaning by language users. She/he is also not in a position to know what that "meaningfulness" of the experiences entails, what she/he her/himself means by it, and what the nature of the experience was. This is so because there are no criteria for him/her to apply, to give the use of the word a meaning. She/he cannot, that is, know whether the experiences are meaningful. This is so just because she/he does not know what she/he means by saying it, just as one cannot comment on whether a gworkum eats joils or not - and we will not be able to until gworkum and joils are defined in language.

It has been argued above that for someone to speak meaningfully about something, and to experience something meaningfully, it is absolutely necessary that she/he be capable of speaking a language. This assertion is, I believe, fundamental to Lacan's analysis of the subject,

and to the way in which he theorises about the infant before language is accessible to it. The argument given above in support of this assertion is clearly only a sketch of an argument. There is, however, an entire Wittgensteinian corpus of work which argues for, and uses this assertion, of which the seminal work is probably Wittgenstein's own Philosophical Investigations (1958). Lacan himself is clear in his adherence to it. "For...the originality of the analytic method...depends on... the means...of the Word, insofar as the Word confers a meaning on the functions of the individual" (Lacan, 1968, p.19). The sketch given here will therefore suffice to give the tenor of such fuller arguments, albeit crudely and even simply incorrectly. What is necessary for this thesis is the fact that Lacan adheres to this tenet of linguistic philosophy.

Lacan states that "speech constitutes truth" (1977a, p.43); and elsewhere he says, "the symptom is a return of truth. It is to be interpreted only in the order of the signifier, which is meaningful only in relation to another signifier" (quoted in Lemaire, p.188). That is, "Lacan uses 'signifier' in a contextual theory of meaning, and would obviously subscribe to Wittgenstein's slogan: 'The meaning is the use'. Thus he also uses 'signifier' to avoid the implication that any given word 'contains' or 'has' a meaning of its own, outside its diacritic reference to other signifiers" (Wilden, 1968, p.235). And finally, "The more closely one grasps things, the more clearly one sees that, somewhere in the discourse made by the other, there is a mistake in the agreed usage of the signs" (quoted in

Lemaire, p.116); and similarly Lacan can speak of "the words [that the code defines by their use]" (1977a, p.186). That is, in Lacanian terms, we still live partly in the imaginary register, even if unconsciously, after we have entered the symbolic register.

Was I justified in drawing these consequences? What is called a justification here? How is language, and a part of it, the word "justification" used? Describe language—a part is the games. From these you will also be able to see a nature of the importance of being justified (1958, p.137).

And this is a linguistic way of conceiving of the split between conscious and unconscious brought about by the primal repression which resolves the Oedipal crisis. That is to say, the part of us which, once we have entered language, is symbolised and so can be said to have meaning for us, can become conscious. And the part which is not symbolised and therefore cannot have meaning for us, is the unconscious.

The question is: what does imponderable evidence accomplish? Suppose that there were imponderable evidence for the chemical (internal) structure of a substance, still it would have to prove itself to be evidence by certain consequences which can be weighed (ibid., p.228).

The process of splitting outlined above is a purely static effect of the nature of language and meaning. It should however be remembered at this point that the infant is understood to have been impelled to enter language by its desire, so that there is a dynamic Oedipus, and therefore into language.

It follows then that the human subject as we know it or as it has meaning for us, only comes into being upon passing through the

Before that we cannot speak of the infant as doing or feeling anything, and at the same time mean by such statements what we would mean if we were to speak about language-speaking beings in the same way. And, again, the being that has passed through that Oedipus cannot speak of itself meaningfully except insofar as it speaks about things for which language can provide criteria for the meaning of the terms referring to them.

To continue with the main thread of the argument, it may be said that the unconscious part of us has being but no meaning. It is there, but we cannot speak of or do anything meaningfully

with it. The crunch of the matter for Lacan, however, is that the converse applies. There is an all-important conscious part of us (to use grossly misleading terminology) which has meaning, but no being. This is the conscious subject of desire.

> Let us illustrate this with what we are dealing with here, namely, the being of the subject, that which is there beneath the meaning. If we choose being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is of the nature of this meaning, as it emerges...to be...eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier (Lacan, 1977b, p.211).

The reason lies in the fact that the part of us which has meaning only has it because it is in language. Lacan gives a way of elaborating this by explaining the dynamic aspect of the splitting of conscious and unconscious, separation. In order to enter into the symbolic and language, Lacan maintains the child's desire creates a metaphor, the paternal metaphor, in which the Name-of-the-Father replaces the mother's desire in signifying the phallus. This metaphor is not to be conceived of simply a phenomenon outside of the child, which the child could for example now observe and discuss. The nature of the child must be seen as having been organised according to the structure of this metaphor. For the only way that the child could construct this metaphor, given that

it related predominantly in the imaginary prior to the constitution of that metaphor, was by reorganising itself to make a new mode of relating, a new register, possible. And this reorganisation, as was argued in the preceding section, consisted in a radical split into conscious and unconscious.

is split we have already discussed in terms of its static aspect, the vel of alienation. We assimilated it then to the split between what is in language and what is not. But by taking into account separation, the dynamic operation of desire just described above, by which the vel of alienation is enabled to occur, additional implications of the split emerge.

The most important of these implications, for the moment, is that the excluded portion of the child is understood to be the child's original desire. It is the desire before it has contorted, distorted and hidden itself by the creation of the paternal metaphor, before it has lost its immediate nature by being diffracted in the defiles of the signifier. "It is worth recalling that it is in the oldest demand that the primary identification is produced, that which is brought about by the mother's omnipotence, that is to say, the identification that not only suspends the satisfaction of needs from the signifying apparatus, but also that which fragments them, filters them, models them upon the defiles of the structure of the signifier" (Lacan, 1977a, p.255).

Again,

> desire is situated in dependence on demand - which, by being articulated in signifiers, leaves a metonymic remainder that runs under it, an element that is not indeterminate, which is a condition both, absolute and

> unapprehensible, an element necessarily lacking,
> unsatisfied, impossible, misconstrued (méconnu),
> an element that is called desire (Lacan, 1977b, p.154).

This quote also makes clear that the part of the child which is in language is only that which has been substituted for the excluded part. For, as was argued in the preceding section, the paternal metaphor and with it the split into conscious and unconscious, was created by the rendering unconscious of the desire for the mother's desire and the substitution for it of the Name-of-the-Father, which now represented or signified it. So what remains conscious, in language, are signifiers of what is unconscious.

It may be added that these signifiers clearly have other uses in addition to signifying what is unconscious. But those uses do not affect our present argument, since from the point of view of desire all signifiers used by the subject signify what is unconscious, and the other uses of signifiers do not contradict this.

To return to the main argument, it follows that the subject of desire does not exist insofar as she/he is in language. For all that exists in language are substitutes for true desire, which is repressed into a split-off unconscious. The subject of desire which is manifested in language is the subject of a substitute for desire, what Lacan calls the subject of demand, where demand is need expressed in language. The subject of the true, original desire, is only to be found in the unconscious. And the true subject of desire has being. The only being possessed by the subject that is manifested in language is not its own, but that of language itself.

> The fading of the subject (splitting) comes about in the suspension of desire, because the subject is eclipsed in the signifier of demand and in the fixation of the phantasy (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.165).

And

> The signifier...functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, so to speak, as subject (Lacan, 1977b, p.207).

We are now at the point where the threads of this section can come together. The subject that is manifested in lanauage is not only, as it obviously is, the subject that speaks and of which we speak. It is also the only subject that <u>can</u> speak and of which we <u>can</u> speak. This is so because the subject of the true desire is unconscious and kept so by its own operation in constructing the paternal metaphor. Consequently, the only subject of which we can speak and the only subject which can itself speak, has no being other than that of language.

Furthermore, this is the only subject of which we can say that it can act and understand the meaning of its action. For the subject in the unconscious is not in language and consequently has no necessary relation to the meaning meant by language-speakers. Thus the human subject, insofar as we can speak about it meaningfully, and insofar as it can meaningfully act, has meaning but no being.

The subject of speech and action, then, has no being other than that of language. That is to say, the "I" of the spoken statement is not merely a signifier signifying the subject; it is on the contrary all of the subject that appears in the world of meaning, the symbolic register. And it is all of the subject that can act meaningfully. For "the characteristic of the subject of the unconscious is that of being, beneath the signifier than develops its networks, its chains and its history, at an indeterminate place" (Lacan, ibid., p.208). Consequently, insofar as we discuss and analyse the subject in any discursive context, we are speaking - and can only speak - about something that has the characteristics of a linguistic unit. Lacan takes the signifier as this unit, partly because a pure signifier is conceivable, while a pure signified, without a signifier, is not. The relevant characteristics of the signifier were discussed in Chapter Two. The two most important in this context are, firstly, that the signifier has no positive being of its own, but is defined only by its difference from all the other signifiers with which it is in a synchronic relation. In Lacan's words, "the signifier is constituted only from a synchronic...collection of elements in which each is sustained only by the principle of its opposition to each of the others" (ibid., p.263). And secondly, that the signifier has no necessary consistency over time, since it can occupy different and contradictory synchronic positions depending on changing contexts. "The signifiers were able to constitute themselves in simultaneity only by virtue of...constituent diachrony" (Lacan, 1977b, p.46). The first of these characteristics of the signifier we called in the preceding chapter the paradigmatic aspect, or synchronic aspect, and the second we called the syntagmatic, or diachronic aspect.

Thus the "I" of the spoken statement (the énoncé, as the spoken

statement is frequently called) has no positive being of its own, but is only defined by its difference from all the other pronouns, proper names, and other synchronic terms. And, again, as argued above, this is the nature of the subject entirely, insofar as she/he has access to meaning.

These last two points are crucial to the argument of this thesis.

3.4 The Entrapment of Desire in Contradiction

A central fact produced by psychoanalysis which remains to be considered is that the subject, despite the fact of her/his possessing only the being of a signifier, believes her/himself to have a consistent, positive being, at least in Western cultures. She/he believes that she/he has what may literally be called an identity - that which remains the same. This section will describe how Lacan deals with this fact and how he theorises its contradictory relation to what he construes to be the true state of affairs. "Truth", it should be added, has the same status here as "fact". Truth is the facts produced by theoretical work; it is not revealed.[5] Lacan's conclusions will be elaborated on a little.

That this account is dependent on theorising, and does not claim to be absolute reality, will be taken from now on as read, and not perpetually indicated in the text. For, to recur to Freud's words, "It seems unnecessary for me to appeal here to the 'as if' which has become so popular. The value of a 'fiction' of this kind...depends on how much one can achieve with its help" (1926, p.194).

5. "Further reflection tells us that the adult's ego-feeling cannot have been the same from the beginning. It must have gone through a process of development, which, cannot, of course, be demonstrated but which admits of being constructed with a fair degree of probability" (Freud, 1930, p.66).

The subject, it was concluded in the preceding section, has meaning insofar as it speaks, but no being. This is the subject of the spoken statement, the énoncé. And the subject where it really is, where it has being, in the unconscious, has no meaning. This is a consequence of the radical split between conscious and unconscious brought about by the primal repression involved in creating the paternal metaphor.

Although the split is radical, however, what is conscious and speaks language, the subject of the énoncé, was originally brought into being as a substitute for or derivative of the now-unconscious subject. This was argued in the preceding section to follow from the nature of the paternal metaphor. Thus the unconscious subject, although split off from the subject of the énoncé, still speaks in a derivative form through it.

> For a minimal composition of the battery of signifiers suffices to install in the signifying chain a duplicity which overlaps with its reduplication of the subject, and it is this reduplication of the subject of speech that the unconscious as such finds the means to articulate itself (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.119).

The unconscious subject lies behind all the statements of the subject of the énoncé.

Lacan therefore distinguishes this unconscious subject by calling it the subject of the act of speaking, of the

enunciation itself rather than the statement, the subject of the énonciation. This subject may be inferred from its effects on the speech and acts of the subject of the énoncé, in parapraxes, jokes, dreams, and neurotic and psychotic symptoms. When the subject is not specified here, it will be the true subject, the subject of the énonciation, that is being spoken of.

In the last section the automatic splitting effect of language and meaning was discussed, and Lacan's name for it, the vel of alienation, mentioned. He calls it the vel for a reason significant in this context. Vel, the Latin for "or", is appropriate to designate a type of choice. The specific type of choice which Lacan introduces is

> a choice whose properties depend on this, that there is, in the joining, one element that, whatever the choice operating may be, has as its consequence a neither one, nor the other. The choice, then, is a matter of knowing whether one wishes to preserve one of the parts, the other disappearing in any case.
>
> Let us illustrate this with what we are dealing with here, namely, the being of the subject, that which is there beneath the meaning. If we choose being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the

> subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is of the nature of this meaning...to be...eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier... Your freedom or your life! If he chooses freedom, he loses both immediately - if he chooses life, he has life deprived of freedom (Lacan, 1977b, op.211-212).

The subject, then, may choose to enter language, and so lose being, or not to enter language, and so not gain meaning.

Remembering that the vel of alienation is one aspect of the Oedipal resolution, we can now again take into account the other, dynamic aspect, separation. Separation, it will be recalled, is that operation of desire by which the subject brings about the split by constructing the paternal metaphor. It does this in order to preserve the object and aim of desire while avoiding the castration attendant upon this preservation. And it is impelled to do so with all the force of the need to escape absolute lack, with all the force of its desire to be complete and satiated in the mother, and with all the force of its terror at the threat of losing the organ which signifies the possibility of fulfilling those needs and desires. The subject is therefore impelled into this no-win choice, the vel of alienation, and into being irrevocably split into the subject of meaning or the subject of being.

It will be recalled from the section on the mirror stage that the primal object of desire is to be the object of

the mother's desire, and hence to be an object such as she might recognise. On the basis of this desire the ego is developed, an imaginary coherent and consistent image, with which the subject identifies in the imaginary register.

> The drama of the subject...is that he faces the test of his lack of being. It is because it fends off this moment of lack that an image moves into position to support the whole worth of desire: projection, a function of the Imaginary (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.72).

It will be recalled too from the section on the problem of meaning, that the subject is in fact not such a consistent being, but only has the being of a signifier. That is, it has no positive being of its own, but only definition given to it by its difference from all the other terms with which it is in relation. Furthermore, it has no necessary consistency over time, but can be defined in contradictory ways in different contexts. Indeed, even the "ego...is" in fact "intermittent" (Lacan, 1977a, p.313). These we called the paradigmatic (or synchronic) and syntagmatic (or diachronic) aspects respectively. Furthermore, as we have just argued, it is the subject's desire which impells it to enter the symbolic and language and so to become a signifier insofar as it has meaning. Thus the subject becomes "subordinated to the same conventional conditions as those of the signifier in its double register: the synchronic register of opposition between irreducible elements, and the

diachronic register of substitution and combination, through which language, even if it does not fulfil all functions, structures everything concerning relations between human beings" (Lacan, 1977a, p.255).

The subject is therefore impelled by desire to occupy two simultaneous and contradictory positions. In the one, it believes itself to be a consistent positive being, the ego.[6] This is in the imaginary.

> The only homogeneous function of consciousness is the imaginary capture of the ego by its mirror reflection and the function of misrecognition which remains attached to it (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.73).

And

> The ego is absolutely impossible to distinguish from the imaginary captures which constitute it from head to foot: by another and for another (Lacan, quoted ibid.).

6. "Normally, there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of our self, of our own ego. This ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else. That such an appearance is deceptive, and that on the contrary the ego is continued inwards, without any sharp delimitation, into an unconscious mental entity which we designate as the id and for which it serves as a kind of facade - this was a discovery first made by psycho-analytic research...But towards the outside, at any rate, the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation" (Freud, 1930, p.66). And "The ego is here playing the ludicrous part of the clown in a circus who by his gestures tries to convince the audience that every change in the circus ring is being carried out under his orders" (Freud, 1914, p.53). →

Furthermore, what is signified by the "I" with which the subject designates him/herself, and by all the phrases and aspects of verbal and non-verbal style that present the subject in various ways, is misrecognised by the subject as the ego. The I signified by language, that is, is identified with the imaginary object that is the ego. The "imaginary process... begins with the specular image and goes on to the constitution of the ego by way of subjectification by the signifier" (Lacan, 1977a, p.307).

In the other position, the subject is in fact committed to having no positive being at all, having taken the choice of the vel of alienation. This is in the symbolic. Lacan calls the misbelief of the first position a méconnaissance, a misrecognition.

The contradiction outlined above is complex. Firstly, there is a trap for desire in the imaginary méconnaissance. For nothing can in reality give the subject's desire complete satiety: the subject is, irrevocably upon being born, characterised or marked by a lack, So the imaginary ego, developed to lure the mother's desire, is a futile construction. This construction, however, cannot be abandoned. For it has not been destroyed upon entry into the symbolic, but repressed into the unconscious, the contents of which are eternal, since they are not susceptible to reality-testing and modification (Freud, 1915b). The entry into the symbolic has therefore removed the possibility of abandoning the subject's original and futile means of achieving

the object of its desire.[7]

Secondly, the entry into the symbolic was not merely a path to reach a goal of desire alternative to the primal goal, and which just happened to contradict the primal goal. It was, on the contrary, a path taken to avoid losing that same primal goal, upon the threat of castration, a direct threat to remove all apparent possibility of reaching the goal. Thus the subject's desire, in preserving its goal, brought about the negation or loss of even what the imaginary had to offer by way of achieving that goal. In effect the subject has exchanged a real castration for a symbolic one.

Thirdly, the subject's desire, by becoming committed to the symbolic, and consequently relegating the primal desire to the unconscious, has deprived that primal desire of meaning. It can therefore only find meaning in representatives and substitutes on the level of spoken language. This means that it can never be satisfied, for whatever the spoken demand, it cannot mean what the unconscious desire is a desire for. Thus the entry into the symbolic, the means of preserving the primal goal of desire, is the very thing which causes the unsatisfied desire perpetually to be renewed.

7. "We shall not be wrong, perhaps, in saying that the weak point in the ego's organization seems to lie in its attitude to the sexual function, as though the biological antithesis between self-preservation and the preservation of the species had found a psychological expression at that point" (Freud, 1940, p.186). This quotation, while supporting the text, also displays a different use of terms like "the ego" to Lacan's, indicating his selective usage of Freudian concepts to develop a topology of the psyche which is arguably different from Freud's own.

The subject is therefore trapped in a triple sense. It has made permanent a futile means to an impossible aim and object. It has permanently removed itself further from attaining this object that it has permanently institutionalised, directly opposed itself to attaining that object, in the very attempt to preserve that original object. And it has rendered its need for that object permanent in the attempt to preserve the possibility of satisfying and removing that need. These three are inextricably in a self-perpetuating circle. The permanency of each is ensured by the permanency of each of the others.

And all this is motivated and supported by two desperate motivations of the subject's. The first is to fill the lack which engendered desire, a lack now permanently fixed by the split between conscious and unconscious, being and meaning. The second is to avoid castration, which would mean the clear impossibility of filling the lack. This castration is now permanently effected on the symbolic level, by the radical split from the mother, entailing abandoning the quest to be the phallus for her. The preservation by loss entailed in the triple trap is mirrored in the results of the double desperation which motivated its inception.

The subject may therefore be said to be invested in language with a double desperation and a triple captation.

Two additional points need to be made to complete this chapter. The first of these is an elucidation of Lacan's concept of the Other. Upon entering into language, the subject enters an order which is constituted by commonly accepted usage of signs. And each element of this order, each sign, is only defined by its

relations with all the other signs with which it can combine or which can replace it. This was elaborated in Chapter Two. It is clear that this order, the symbolic, must have existed before the subject entered it. For there would otherwise be no such thing as agreed usages and established definition by relations.

The subject therefore enters an order which, while defining him/her, and giving him/her all the meaning she/he has, was originally completely other than the subject. "Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth...the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and even beyond his death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it" (Lacan, 1977a, p.68). This is one sense of what Lacan means by the Other, with a capital O. "The Other is, therefore, the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks to him who hears...But this locus also extends as far into the subject as the laws of speech, that is to say, well beyond the discourse that takes its orders from the ego, as we have known ever since Freud discovered its unconscious field and the laws that structure it" (ibid., p.141).

It follows from the argument of this chapter that the subject is invested in the Other with a double desperation and a triple captation.

For "the primary identification...brought about by the mother's omnipotence...suspends the satisfaction of needs from the signifying apparatus" (ibid., p.255).

The subject is therefore trapped in something, by virtue of which alone it is a human subject capable of meaning, and which at the same time operates or functions in ways entirely of its own. These are the ways of symbolic formations: "the human organism in the most intimate recesses of its being, manifests its capture in a symbolic dimension" (Lacan, 1972, p.39). This includes all the aspects of the social formation, economic, political, ideological and signifying. The subject is given meaning by the Other, and hence by social structures. "For where on earth would one situate the determinations of the unconscious if it is not in those nominal cadres in which marriage ties and kinship are always grounded for the speaking being that we are, in the laws of the Word where lineages found their right, in this universe of discourse with which these laws mingle their traditions? And how would one apprehend the analytical conflicts and their Oedipean prototype outside the engagements which have fixed, long before the subject came into the world, not only his destiny but his identity itself?" (Lacan, quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.126). More simply, Lacan speaks of "the function of being for the Other, of situating the subject in it, marking his place in the field of the group's relations, between each individual and all the others" (1977b, p.206.

This is a more precise terminology for what has already been argued. In substituting the Name-of-the-Father for the mother's desire, for example, we said that the child entered into language.

Implicit in this is that the Name-of-the-Father, being a signifier, is defined not as a real positive being but only by its relation to all other synchronously related signifiers. Consequently the child has in fact invested its desire in a whole network of signifiers, albeit a network which will become more elaborate and detailed. This may be put more neatly by saying that the subject's desire is in the Other - in fact arises in the Other, since, as argued earlier, desire proper originates upon the entry into language. Furthermore, the phallus signified by the mother's desire is also a signifier, as is the mother's desire which signifies it. It may again be said therefore that, insofar as the subject desires to be the phallus to be desired by the mother, it desires the desire of the Other.

Again, the unconscious contains repressed signifiers - although, as argued in connection with the imaginary, only their effects on conscious discourse can be spoken about, and not their precise nature in themselves - so that the unconscious, too, is in a sense the Other. Lacan speaks of the Other in ways so flexible as not to be uniform in a number of respects. "The Other, by which name we designate a place essential to the structure of the symbolic". "If it (ça) speaks in the Other it is because it is there that the subject, by means of a logic anterior to any awakening of the signified, finds its signifying place". "Desire is the desire for desire, the desire of the Other and it is subject to the Law" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, p.157, p.164). But only very limited uses of the concept of the Other are relevant to this thesis, principally its implication that the subject is trapped in social structures. This will be further argued in the next chapter.

The second point is that the subject is not only capable of using metaphor, but also metonymy. Signifiers can only be substituted for one another by elided connections, once their distinction from each other is grasped, but they can be substituted for each other by connections of contiguity in time or place. This last is metonymy. It adds to our understanding of how substitutes for and disguised signifiers of the unconscious elements are elaborated as the human being develops. Lacan assimilates metaphor and metonymy to Freud's condensation and displacement, respectively.

> There is a homogeneous structure in symptoms, dreams, parapraxes and jokes. The same structural laws of condensation and displacement are at work in them: these are the laws of the unconscious. These laws are the same as those which create meaning in language (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, ibid., pp.191-192).

And

> It is a question of rediscovering in the laws that govern that other scene...the effects that are discerned at the level of the chain of materially unstable elements that constitute language: effects determined by the double play of combination and substitution in the signifier, according to the two aspects that generate the signified: metaphor and metonymy (Lacan, 1977a, p.285).

Thus, in Lacan's words, "the structure of language has been

recognized in the unconscious" (1977a, p.298).[8]

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to reach a few major conclusions. These are that the subject as we know it can only be thought of as a signifier; that we cannot know or reach the being of the subject as this is unconscious and beyond language; that the subject's desire is trapped and invested in the Other with a double desperation and a triple captation; and that, consequently, the subject is trapped in an impossible quest with a double desperation and a triple captation. These conclusions will be made major use of in the course of this thesis.

Finally, let it be repeated that that part of Lacan's views which has been interpreted here has been ruthlessly constrained to the purposes of this thesis in respect to both relevance and space. It has therefore been deadened to the point of necrosis, its value for all other purposes having been completely disregarded. This is more a tribute to Lacan's versatility, however, than a comment on the validity of this interpretation for the purposes for which it is intended.

8. Speaking of hysteria and contrasting it to obsessive compulsive neurosis, Freud states "repression does not take place by the construction of an excessively strong antithetic idea (as in the obsessive compulsive case)... but by the intensification of a boundary idea, which... is the result of a compromise; this, however, is not manifested in a replacement on the basis of some category of subject-matter (as in obsessive compulsive neurosis), but by displacement of attention along a series of ideas linked by temporal simultaneity...There is thus no need to assume that the same idea is being suppressed at each repetition of the primary attack; it is a question in the first instance of a gap in the psyche" (1896, pp. 228-229, insertions added). The last point makes the same ultimate connection between the use of or entry into language and the primary lack as Lacan makes. His own term béance ("gap") is pertinent here.

4. LACAN AND IDEOLOGY

It was concluded in the last chapter that the subject is trapped in language and the symbolic, and that the subject is therefore trapped in the social formation insofar as this is embodied in language and the symbolic. Furthermore, it was concluded that the subject is only conceivable in the same way in which a signifier may be conceived, and that the subject is given meaning only by language and therefore by the social formation.

One aspect of the social formation which is clearly embodied in language and the symbolic, is ideology. An attempt will be made in this chapter to elaborate on the ways in which ideology contributes to the constitution of the subject as understood by Lacan.

For this purpose aspects of a particular post-Althusserian view on ideology will be adopted. This will be principally that taken by Barthes (1972a), Coward and Ellis (1977) and Bennett (1979). Only those aspects of this view that are relevant here will be defended. The debates which rage around the nature and importance of ideology will not be entered into. For the aim of this thesis is to answer, in a Lacanian framework, a specific question related to the individual experience of homosexuality in self and others. A specific conception of ideology has been chosen because the concepts it applies to some of the areas of its field of application are particularly useful in answering the questions asked here. They are particularly useful for two reasons. Firstly, they are concepts which are directly pertinent to homophobia, concepts like "natural", "unnatural",

and the "constitution of the subject". Secondly, the theoretical perspective implicit in the formulation of these concepts coheres with the present interpretation of Lacan. This should become clear in the course of the chapter. The validity of this conception of ideology, as far as this thesis is concerned, therefore, will lie in the use which this particular selection of its concepts is shown to have in answering the questions asked in the thesis. Whether it is a valid conception as a whole, or with respect to all the controversies over the place and nature of ideology, is of no consequence here. Section 4.2 will attempt to clarify the assumptions on which the present view on ideology is based, and also to specify some of the debates about ideology that are not relevant. This should help to clarify just what view is being taken up here from the highly contentious area of the theory of ideology, and what debates are not being interfered with.

4.1 How Ideology Fits in with a Lacanian Approach to Homophobia

Lacan, speaking of the Other, "by which name we designate a place essential to the structure of the symbolic" (quoted in Lemaire, 1977, p.157), maintains that

> The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier (1977b, p.207).

It was concluded in the previous chapter that the subject is constituted in and given meaning by language. Consequently the subject is constituted as part of a structure that

preceded it, the system that is language. In Lacan's words, "the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts, in their destiny...their innate gifts and social acquisitions notwithstanding...and... everything that might be considered the stuff of psychology, kit and caboodle, will follow the path of the signifier" (1972a, p.60). Furthermore, the properties of the subject are therefore those of the signifier, in particular the "I" of the spoken statement, the énoncé.

We may therefore learn more about the vicissitudes of the subject by examining the properties of the signifier, and in particular of the signifier "I" and the other signifying structures that refer to the subject, such as style of speech and whole utterances. Some of these properties have already been discussed in an earlier chapter. But of special importance to this thesis are the ideological properties of language, given that a certain attitude to homosexuality is evident and perpetuated in the ways in which it is spoken and written about and can only be communicated in signs. This chapter will therefore consist in an elaboration of some aspects of ideological discourse, with respect to their importance for the constitution of the "I" of the énoncé.

4.2 A Definition of Ideology

This section, as stated earlier, will be an attempt to specify the assumptions about ideology that are adopted here, as well as some of the controversial assumptions that are being avoided. This should help to clarify what is understood here by "ideology".

Ideology will be taken here to be that aspect of a discourse which, for whatever reason, makes the world signified by the signifiers and statements in that discourse, appear unquestionably to have certain characteristics which it does not in fact unquestionably have. It is the unquestionable, obviously-so nature of the signification that is to be stressed in this definition. This will be elaborated in the next section.

This initial definition may be objected to on the grounds that it says nothing useful, as it is possible that all language must inevitably signify the world as having unquestionable characteristics. Indeed, it is arguable that human life would be impossible without such a signification. But it is not necessary to enter into this debate here. For even if all language <u>is</u> ideological, we can still identify the effects of ideology in particular contexts and meaningfully discuss them. Thus the above definition is not useless on that account.

Ideology, too, is not regarded here as identical to language. It is seen here as one way in which language operates, or as one level of analysis of language, suitable to answer certain types of question. The relation between language and ideology can, of course, be differently conceived for other purposes than the present ones. It is held here that "Ideology is a level of meaning which can be present in all kinds of discourses" (Larrain, 1979, p.130). Indeed, it is an important point for the purposes of this thesis that language can be understood as containing a number of different and even contradictory ideological discourses simultaneously. As Coward and Ellis put it,

> language is worked by ideological practice: language at any historical moment is riddled with styles, rhetorics, "ways of speaking" which impose a specific social position, a definite view of the world. These ideological discourses are the product of the articulation of ideology in language. Language is more than these discourses, just as ideology is more than just ideas (1977, p.79).

Ideology can, however, be seen as having the characteristics of language, since it is only conceivable as a system of meanings. And meaning, as we use the term, occurs only in language in the present view as argued in the preceding chapter.

A relevant and contentious question is whether or not ideology has a structure which remains identical throughout history, as Althusser has claimed:

> the peculiarity of ideology is that it is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e. an omni-historical reality, in the sense which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history (1971a, pp.151-152).

This is a debate that will not be entered into here. For all that is claimed for the definition and account of ideology in this chapter is that it applies to the contemporary Western cultures in which aversion to homosexuality exists. The

account of the gay predicament which is the focus of this thesis is not put forward as an account for all time. The final outcome of the debate about Althusser's conception will not therefore affect the validity of what this thesis attempts to do.

There is another preliminary point which needs to be made. This is that Althusser's view is adopted here, that the ideological level of practice is relatively autonomous with respect to the political and economic levels of practice in the social formation. This is another extremely controversial assertion, with a debate centering on just what is meant by relative autonomy, and what the specific relationship is that holds between these levels of practice (for example, Hirst, 1976; Larrain, 1979). Again, this debate will not be engaged in here. It is sufficient for the present purposes that ideology can arguably be viewed as autonomous to the point at which its effects can meaningfully be spoken of without immediate reference to the effects of the other levels of practice. This much is clear from the study of a number of areas (Coward & Ellis, 1977, p.67ff; Coward, Lipschitz & Cowie, 1976).

> For it is no longer a matter of politics and ideology being superstructures which are supported/produced by the economic base, presupposing that they will be forced to undergo their revolutionary change when the economic base is in revolution. It is rather a matter of seeing the articulation of the three practices which depends on the historically

> specific conjuncture. For the contradictions within each practice weigh upon the specific contradictions of the others (Coward & Ellis, ibid., p.69).

This is not to say that ideology is or is not ultimately constituted by the economic relations of the social formation. No assertion in this connection need be made here. All that is being said is that ideology may be spoken of as a factor in its own right, with its own "specific effectivity" Althusser, quoted in Belsey, 1980, p.133, emphasis in original). Although the economy may be argued to be in the last instance determining of the other levels of practice,

> The economic dialectic is never active in the pure state; in History, these instances, the superstructures, etc. - are never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done or, when the Time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the "last instance" never comes (Althusser, quoted ibid., pp.133-134).

A point related to the above is that ideology is taken here to be material. This is again a point of controversy (Larrain, 1979), but all that this is taken to mean here is that ideology has real effects on people and the way they feel and behave. This will be amply demonstrated in the course of this chapter.

In Lacan's words, "language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are trapped in all the corporeal images that captivate the subject; they may make the hysteric "pregnant", be identified with object of penis-neid, represent the flood of urine of urethral ambition, or the retained faeces of avaricious jouissance (enjoyment, pleasure)" (1977a, p.87, insertion added).

4.3 Ideology as Signifier of the Natural

> A sign does not simply exist as part of reality - it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth. Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation...The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Whenever a sign is present, ideology is present too. Everything ideological possesses a semiotic value (Volosinov, quoted in Hebdige, 1979, p.13).

Ideology may therefore relate to reality in a number of different ways. And ideology relates to reality through its embodiment in signs. "Ideology is inscribed in signifying practices - in discourses, myths, presentations and re-presentations of the way 'things' are - and to this extent it is inscribed in the language" (Belsey, op. cit., p.43). Ideology like language in general, of which ideology is understood here to be one aspect, therefore operates by signifying reality in certain ways.

As will be argued now, one signification by ideology is that of naturality. Ideology signifies the world as natural. By this is meant that ideology signifies the world as unquestionably being the way it appears to be. As was argued in the chapter on language, the world as it appears to us is constructed by the signification of language. Ideology consequently has a part in this construction by signification, since it is one way in which language operates. The particular contribution which ideology makes to this signification of the world, and which is addressed in this section, is to hide the fact of that construction of the world by language. Thus, language constructs the world as it appears to us; and language insofar as it operates ideologically makes the world aopear not to be constructed at all. Ideology makes the world appear to be in reality what is in fact only a certain view or interpretation or organisation of it.

> The difficulty is that, although bestowing a signification, a particular conceptual organization on reality, language constantly generates the illusion that it reflects reality instead of signifying it. The organization of the relationships between objects in the world outside language appears to be the same as the organization of the relationships between the concepts of objects within language and, indeed, the latter appears to be the mere mirroring of the former (Bennett, 1979, pp.5-6).

An implication of the fact that language constructs the way

we see the world is that that construction had an origin in history and developed in an historical process. It follows too that the world could have been differently signified by different discourses which had followed different historical paths of development. This is in fact the case in different cultures. "If words stood for pre-existing concepts, they would all have exact equivalents in meaning from one language to the next; but this is not true" (Saussure, quoted in Belsey, op. cit., p.39). Thus ideology, insofar as it is also language, also has an origin and a history, so that the signification it contributes to the signification of the world is in fact one of many possible significations. In Althusser's words, "ideologies...have a history, whose determination in the last instance is clearly situated outside ideologies alone, although it involves them" (1971a, p.150).

But ideology conceals the fact that the discourses in which it is inscribed organise the world. It therefore also conceals these implications of that organisation discussed in the paragraph above. Thus ideology signifies the objects and relations of the world as having no origin in history. And it signifies them as not having developed their essential nature by an historical process, without which they would not have existed at all, without which some other set of relationships and types of object would have appeared to be real. Ideology therefore signifies the world as ahistorical, without origin, eternal, of necessity and by definition existing in the only way possible or conceivable. This is what is meant here by saying that ideology signifies the world as natural. Coward and Ellis speak of

> The production of an ideological vraisemblable which is effective precisely for the reason that it appears as "natural", "the way things are"... The practice of ideology has succeeded when it has produced this "natural attitude", when for example the relations of power are not only accepted but perceived precisely as the way things are, ought to be and will be (op. cit., pp.67-68).

Again,

> This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system (Barthes, 1972a, p.131).

This signification applies also to the signification of the human subject, whether it is by the signifier "I", or "he", "she", "man", "woman", proper names, and so on. Barthes speaks of

> the bourgeois ideology...the process through which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature...The status of the bourgeoisie is particular, historical: man as represented by it is universal, eternal...: bourgeois ideology yields an unchangeable nature (ibid., pp.141-142).

Related assertions may be found in Lacan: Although "those psychoanalytic effects that are decisive for the subject...

follow...faithfully the displacement of the signifier" (1972a, p.40), and "the ego is...intermittent" (1977a, p.313), there is "that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the Gestalten that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field" (1977a, p.17).

Once the objects and relations in the world are seen as unquestionably existing in the only way possible, so that alternative ways of being are inconceivable, these objects and relations cannot require or be susceptible of explanation. It is meaningless to explain something which by definition is the way it is and could not be otherwise. The explanation would be completely superfluous. Indeed, looking for an explanation would imply an historical origin and development of the thing being explained. This would in turn imply that it could have been different and cannot be taken for granted as existing in the only way possible. Thus the whole endeavour of even looking for an explanation is meaningless for a world signified as natural. To put this more simply, taking the world for granted and as obvious automatically means that one does not look for explanations of it. This is not to say that the processes of change of these natural objects are not investigated once the object is already perceived to be an object. But to explain the origin of the very nature or essence of the object or relation as opposed to its evolution once it already exists, is a meaningless endeavour in a world signified as natural. In Barthes' words,

> Bourgeois ideology...records facts or perceives values, but refuses explanations; the order of the world can be seen as sufficient or ineffable, it is never seen as significant. Finally, the basic idea...produces the inverted image of an unchanging humanity, characterized by an indefinite repetition of its identity (ibid., p.142).

This may be expressed by saying that the signifieds of ideological discourse are signified as being essences. They are seen to be things-in-themselves, which simply existed in the world out there before language existed, and language simply gave them names. These names are not seen as given meaning only by their difference from all the other words with which they are in a synchronic relationship. They are seen as simply mirroring the organisation of the world which simply exists exterior to language. The signifieds which are so mirrored we may call essences, as opposed to beings defined by potentially changing relationships.

> What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a <u>natural</u> image of this reality. And...ideology is... constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made. The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences (Barthes, ibid.).

Apart from the fact that it can be demonstrated that it is very likely that the phenomena of human culture have undergone an historical construction, emergence and development, the above discussion gives a very cogent reason for assuming such a history. For at whatever point phenomena are conceived of as essences, at that point they become insusceptible of analysis. To the extent that it is desirable to analyse human phenomena in scientific and academic discourse, it is therefore desirable to avoid conceptualising these phenomena as essences. Furthermore, things can only be systematically influenced and altered to the extent that they may be understood and explained. So that the practical concerns of science will also suffer to the extent that phenomena are conceived as essences. Thus both for epistemological reasons and practical reasons, each fundamental to scientific and academic endeavour, the historicity and relationality of the phenomena of human culture are crucial presuppositions. They are sufficiently important at any rate to be arguably constitutive of scientific discourse (Althusser, passim; Larrain, 1979, passim) and hence to be justifiably put forward in this thesis.

To sum up this section, then, Althusser's formulation seems apt.

> What seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who live in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of

ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology (1971a, pp. 163-164).

4.4 A Note on the Reasons and Mechanisms of the Natural Signification

This section is more in the nature of an excursus than a serious attempt to explain the reasons for or the mechanisms of the signification of naturality. This question does not fall within the province of this thesis, which takes the arguable fact of such a signification as a basis for the explanation of the gay predicament, this last being the true focus of the thesis. The problems of the reasons and manner of the signification of naturality properly require an analysis situated in social sciences other than psychology, probably including an extensive consideration of economic and political practice. For the sake of completion, however, it will nonetheless be attempted in this section to sketch some arguments explaining why and how naturality is signified. This will indicate how the questions to which solutions are offered in this work may be rendered continuous with the types of question approached in other social sciences. Such inter-disciplinary continuity has obvious advantages, particularly in providing frameworks within which the foundational assumptions of this thesis may be tested and elaborated - as indeed they have been and are continuing to be.

It is clear from the statements of Barthes which have been quoted that he sees naturality as serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, that is, the dominant class in the cultures in which ideology operates in the manner described in this chapter. Althusser's solution, which is more to the point for our purposes, is that the signification of naturality ensures that "the vast majority

of (good) subjects work all right "all by themselves", i.e. by ideology...They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (das Bestehende), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss..." (1971a, p.169). He adds that ideology disguises a certain reality:

> the reality which is necessarily ignored (méconnue) in the very forms of recognition (ideology = misrecognition/ignorance) is indeed, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and the relations deriving from them (ibid., p.170).

In disguising the true nature of the subject, produced and defined in the symbolic structures of society only by a set of relationships ("the relations deriving from them"), as was argued in the last chapter, and signifying him/her as natural, an essence, ideology induces the subject to believe that she/he is not produced by larger structures but is a source of self-motivated actions, a being with free will. Consequently it is possible that "the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely... i.e. in order that he shall freely accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection "all by himself" (ibid., p.169).

There is a controversy over this functionalist understanding of ideology which Althusser displays (for example Bennett, 1979; Hirst, 1976). It is not at all intended by the present use of Althusser's conceptualisation to defend him or to enlist his

support in this particular matter for this thesis. It is merely intended to demonstrate an argument which explains the signification of naturality by ideology, simply in order to demonstrate that such an explanation is in principle feasible. Whether the particular explanation utilised here is faulty in part or as a whole is beside the point.

Another level of explanation is provided by Lacan himself, in that the primal object of desire is to be such an object as the mother might recognize. This object would have a positive being analogous to that of the natural essences described in this chapter. Desire therefore leads to a positing by the individual of a natural ego. This level of explanation for the signification by ideological discourse of naturality is clearly too individualistic to be more than a minor aspect of the full explanation. This operation of desire will however be elaborated later in this chapter. It will be used for a related and crucial purpose in explaining the gay predicament in the following chapter.

Barthes suggests one way in which the signification of naturality is achieved. It is achieved by being "what one could call public philosophy, that which sustains everyday life, civil ceremonials, secular rites, in short the unwritten norms of interrelationships in a bourgeois society" (1972a, p.140). That is,

> our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching

as they have been at different times and will be again. Thus the signifier-signified link appears unquestionable in the everyday, "lived" view. It is so obvious a link that the signifier appears simply to be a name for a signified which exists independently of the signifier, and which pre-existed it until a name (now the signifier we use) was found for it. As Coward and Ellis put it,

> the signifier is treated as identical to a (pre-existent) signified. The signifier and signified are not seen as caught up together in a process of production, they are treated as equivalents: the signifier is merely the equivalent of its pre-established concept (signified). It seems as though it is not the business of language to establish this concept, but merely to express or communicate it...Language is treated as though it stands in for, is identical with, the real world (op. cit., p.47).

Because of this apparent transparency of language, it is easy to believe that the organisation of the world according to which we live is natural, the only possible way for the world to be, instead of being constituted by language as it in fact is.

These arguments, sketchy as they are, suggest that the entire ideological discourse acts as a signifier of naturality. This is effected at least by Barthes' catalogue of collective images, by the desire to be essential objects, and by the legal, educational and other institutions which drum in the

apparent security and advantages of having free will and hence being able to dictate one's future prospects. "Realism naturalises the arbitrary nature of the sign; its philosophy is that of an identity between signifier and signified on the level of an entire text as much as that of a single word" (ibid.).

Clearly, however, there is a single word, "natural", and its synonyms and synonymous phrases, which act as this same signifier that the ideological discourse as a whole operates as. And there is the opposed signifier to this, "unnatural", which therefore signifies in opposition to the entire ideological discourse of which it is a part. Again, it is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis to explain according to what mechanisms and why the signifier "unnatural" operates, since it is used here as a basis for addressing the real focus of the thesis. But a brief suggestion will again be made for the reasons given at the start of this section.

Foucault suggests that at one time "prohibitions bearing on sex were essentially of a juridical nature. The 'nature' on which they were based was still a kind of law" (1978, p.38). But as the naturality of certain kinds of sex shifted towards the kind of naturality meant by the ideological signification described in the last section, it became possible to gain power over the prohibited sexual phenomena by "Not the exclusion of these thousand aberrant sexualities, but by the specification, the regional solidification of each one of them" (ibid., p.44). "The machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain did not seek to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality" (ibid., pp.43-44).

This would then enlist even that which contradicts the general ideological signification of naturality in the service of that signification. The unnatural sexualities are "made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a raison d'être and a natural order of disorder" (ibid., p.44). That is, unnaturality is signified as natural, in the essential order of things, an eternal attribute of the subject so signified. "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (ibid., p.43). This contradiction of the naturally unnatural will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Foucault suggests a specific mechanism by which the unnatural is signified as having that special status by ideological discourse, preventing it from being absorbed entirely back into the domain of the natural. It is already clear from Barthes' explanation that natural phenomena are successfully signified as natural by a spreading of a whole "catalogue of collective images". What is unnatural is signified as such equally simply by exclusion. This is not to say that what is unnatural is not spoken about, but that it is not spoken about simply as an image simply amongst other images. When it is included in everyday discourse it is highly evident as that which is not spoken about as unremarkable. It is spoken about as alien. Foucault speaks of "a sentence to disappear, but also...an injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence, and, by implication, an admission that there was

nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (ibid., p.4).

This last point Foucault introduces only to dismiss its truth for his purposes. I have in fact distorted Foucault's arguments occasionally beyond recognition in wrenching them from his very specific problematic. The intention here is again not, however, to adduce Foucault in support of this thesis or even to present his viewpoint, but simply to demonstrate that an explanatory analysis of the signification of unnaturality is in principle possible.

4.5 Ideology and the Constitution of the Subject

It is clear from the discussion of Lacan's view in the preceding chapter that the subject is constituted in language. The subject can only be conceived of as a meaningful being once it can designate itself with a signifier. This signifier only has meaning because it is already in a synchronic relationship with other signifiers. That with which the subject signifies itself, by which signification alone it is a human subject, is therefore already defined by language before the subject arrives. The subject is therefore constituted by language and in it, and hence by ideology.

The conception of ideology drawn from here makes a parallel assertion to the above. In the very act of naming the subject, as "I", "him", "Jane", etc., language immediately constitutes the subject as a subject. That is, by the fact that the subject is addressed (even by her/himself as part of utterances directed to others) primarily with the use of signifiers applied

to subjects, the subject is limited to having a certain type of signifier give it its definition and meaning. And that meaning, clearly, is that of being a subject. As Lacan puts it, "The form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity" (1977a, p.85). Thus "if I call the person to whom I am speaking by whatever name I choose to give him, I intimate to him the subjective function that he will take on again in order to reply to me, even if it is to repudiate this function" (1977a, pp.86-87).

This process is called by Althusser the interpellation of the subject, that is the addressing of the subject with its concomitant constitution of the subject as subject. Althusser speaks of ideology as interpellating the subject (1971a, p.160), but this is an operation more properly attributed to language in general, to what may be called signifying practice to distinguish it from ideological practice (Coward & Ellis, op. cit., p.80). With this qualification Althusser may be quoted:

> all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject... ideology..."transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday...hailing, "Hey, you there!" (1971a, pp.162-163).

A further limitation is placed on the subject in this interpellation by signifying practice. Insofar as language provides a limited variety of organisations of the world at

any given moment, the subject given an entry into meaning by language can only perceive the world in these certain ways. This may be expressed by saying that the subject is interpellated by language to occupy certain positions or standpoints entailing certain limited perspectives on the world. "As well as being a system of signs related among themselves, language incarnates meaning in the form of the series of positions it offers for the subject from which to grasp itself and its relations with the real" (Nowell-Smith, quoted in Belsey, op. cit., p.61). This is clearly not a simple influencing of the subject but an aspect of the very constitution or creation of the subject: all the subject <u>is</u> is an adoption of a position or positions.

> What was it that Saussure in particular reminded us of? That "language (which consists only of differences) is not a function of the speaking subject". This implies that the subject (self-identical or even conscious of self-identity, self-conscious) is inscribed in the language, that he is a "function" of the language (Derrida, quoted in Belsey, ibid., p.59, Derrida's insertion).

This is the point at which ideology may be said to operate. For ideology contributes to the organisation of the world by language. That is, ideology contributes to the de-limiting of the positions which the subject may occupy in language and hence in understanding and operating in the world. The contribution made by ideology is that, as argued in section 4.3, of permitting the subject to perceive the world and itself as natural. So ideology does not simply

deceive the subject into believing its representation of the world. On the contrary, it defines and constitutes the subject so that she/he cannot help but perceive the world in that way. The use of the word "representation" in speaking about the operation of ideology can in this context be misleading in the extreme (Hirst, 1976).

> Thus the imaginary identity of ideology closes off the movement of contradictions, calling upon the subject as consistent. It puts the subject in the position of a homogeneous subject in relation to meaning, a subject who thinks himself/herself to be the point of origin of ideas and of actions...Ideology produces the individual in a relation to representation within the social process in which he or she is situated, as an identity (a point of self-reference) rather than a process (Coward & Ellis, op. cit., p.77).

This constitution of the subject by signifying practice and ideology has clear links with the constitution of the subject as understood by Lacan. The subject is given meaning, the prerequisite for speech and human action, only by language, and can be conceived only as a position in symbolic structures, that is, as a signifier. Furthermore, the subject is signified as natural, that is, as an essence, having a positive and consistent being. This is in accord with the positing of an imaginary ego by desire, a <u>méconnaissance</u> by the subject of its nature as being that of such an object

as the mother might recognize as object of her desire, that which will fill her own lack and complete her. Such an object has an essential, consistent, positive being of the type signified by the "I" of ideological discourse.

> The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as Gestalt...this Gestalt...symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination; it is still pregnant with the correspondences that unite the I with the statue in which man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him, or with the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find completion (Lacan, 1977a, pp.2-3).

And, as Lacan points out, this ego becomes identified with the "I" of the énoncé once the subject is constituted in the symbolic, and the signification of this "I" is, as stated in the above quote, misrecognised in the same way as the ego, and for the same motives of desire.

> This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infans stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the

> universal, its function as subject.
>
> This form...will also be the source of secondary identifications...But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being (le devenir) of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality (Lacan, ibid., p.2).

Thus the operation of desire as viewed by Lacan and the operation of ideology as described in this chapter are at one in the understanding of the signification of the subject by the "I" of ideological discourse. The contribution of ideology to the constitution of the subject may therefore be explored consistently with Lacan's conceptualisation of the operation of desire in that constitution of the subject.

> Lacan's conception of the imaginary provides a route for understanding how the positioning of a subject in relation to language and, therefore, social relations is always accomplished in specific ideological formations. The identifications made by the infant in the process by which it produces itself in discourse are always already in ideology (Coward & Ellis, op. cit., p.76).

This meeting of ideology and desire will be extensively explored in the following chapter, in relation to the gay

predicament.

4.6 The Transformation of Ideological Discourse

An attempt will be made in this section to explain the linguistic mechanisms by which the ideological discourses in which the subject is constituted can be transformed. The fundamental point to note is that, while the connection between signifier and signified at any given moment is so close that they cannot be experienced as separate from each other, that connection was nonetheless historically brought about.

> The understanding of the subject in signification produced by both Marxism and psychoanalysis suggests the necessity of seeing the sign as only one moment in the process of signification. It is the moment which produces and fixes meaning but it is not an absolute, pre-given relation. It is the sign, the relation between signifier and signified, which is fixed in the construction of positions for the predicating subject. Such an understanding emphasises the activity of the signifier, whose limitation to produce certain signifieds therefore becomes a question of positionality in sociality and social relations (Coward & Ellis, op. cit., p.122).

The signifier operates to produce the signified. "Linguistics enables us to see the signifier as the determinant of the signified" (Lacan, 1977a, p.299). This operation of the signifier is not only a function of its relational definition

in the synchronic network of signifiers, but also of the diachronic process by which that particular synchronic arrangement of terms came about.

There are a number of factors which play a part in that diachronic transformation of discourses from one synchronic structure to another. Firstly, speech always occurs in a specific context, and its meaning is partly given by that context. So for example when one addresses someone else the "I" and "you" of one's sentence have different meanings from those they would have had the sentence been spoken between two different people. In Bennett's words, "all language forms are predicated on distinctive, historically produced relationships between speaker(s) and listener(s) - ...such cases as drawing-room conversation and language etiquette" (op. cit., pp.79-80). Thus speech is moulded by specific contexts. And in changing its form and structure, the unspoken paradigmatic structure which is essential to the meaning of the spoken utterance, is shifted, so that many of its terms acquire a different definition or meaning, if only minimally different, in their altered relationship to each other. That is, parole (speech) has a reciprocal action on the basis from which it arises, langue (language).

> This is the order that the actual generative process of language follows: social intercourse is generated (stemming from the basis); in it, verbal communication and interaction are generated; and in the latter, forms of speech performance are generated; finally, this generative process is reflected in the change of language forms (Volosinov, quoted in Bennett, ibid., p.80).

Here, then, is one mechanism of the transformation of discourses.

It may be erroneously inferred from the above that meaning does not reside solely in language, since material context plays a part. This is incorrect. Language is a prerequisite (not temporally, but logically) for meaning to be possible. Once that meaning already exists, context can enter into and delimit that meaning more precisely. Ultimately, "the signifier is constituted only from a synchronic...collection of elements in which each is sustained only by the principle of its opposition to each of the others" (Lacan, 1977a, p.304). The relational definition and being of the signifier is, so to speak, the minimum necessary condition for language and hence meaning to be possible. Whatever is added after that is entirely dependent on it.

Another mechanism arises from the fact that, as Volosinov puts it, there are "differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign-community" (quoted in Bennett, ibid., p.81). This allows for "discrepancies of meaning which may be attached to the same words by virtue of the different uses to which they are put in different, socially produced linguistic practices" (Bennett, ibid., p.80). Thus the same language can contain a number of different and even contradictory discourses. The subject therefore has a choice of a number of different positions or perspectives to take up and to oppose to each other, should this be desired. The play of different discourses against each other provides another mechanism of the transformation of discourse.

Insofar as ideology is a level of operation of language, it too can be transformed in these ways. The ideological signification of a discourse may be conceived to change with the other levels of signification in language. The precise manner in which it may be said to change with respect to those of its properties described in this chapter will be discussed at length in Chapter Six. For reasons that will be discussed there, revolutionary changes in ideology will not be considered in this context. "Modifications" may be a less misleading term than "changes".

It may be noted in passing that this continuity of the construction of linguistic discourse with the processes of change on other levels of the social formation opens the study of signification to historical materialist analysis. For "if language is a system of signs, then not only sounds or written texts, but also all meaningful social practices and cultural phenomena may constitute particular kinds of language" (Larrain, 1979, p.130). Furthermore, although Lacan makes use of structuralist concepts, he does not share all of the epistemological commitments of classical structuralism. Indeed, his view on the subject and language is fundamentally a developmental one, so that the construction of subject-positions in language and the diachronic production of the link between signifier and signified is given full weight in his understanding. Lacan speaks of "the signifier as the determinant of the signified" (1977a, p.299) and states that

> Between the two chains...those of the signifiers as opposed to all the ambulatory signified that circulate because they are always in the process

> of sliding - the pinning-down or capping point I speak of is mythical, for never has anyone been able to pin a meaning to a signifier; but on the other hand, what one can do is to pin a signifier to a signifier and see what happens. But in that case, something new always results... namely, the appearance of a new meaning...(quoted in Laplanche and Leclaire, 1972, p.155).

Lacan's work is therefore also continuous with the semiotics which emphasises the historical production of the signifier-signified link (the semiotics of the Tel Quel writers, from whom Coward and Ellis draw in the work so extensively adduced here).

Because of these continuities between Lacan and contemporary semiotics on the one hand, and between historical materialism and semiotics on the other, the clash between historical materialism and classical structuralism does not apply in the present framework. This clash is not therefore a factor to militate against a synthesis between Lacan and the particular conception of ideology used here. We are in agreement, that is, with Larrain's representatively anti-structuralist assertion that

> The presence of the ideological in a discourse does not consist of immanent properties of the texts, but of a system of relationships between the text and its production, circulation and consumption (op. cit., p.140).

The view on ideology put forward above is consonant with the statement that "structures are themselves the result of man's practice" (ibid., p.150). And, indeed, it is an important argument in this thesis that, in consequence of this last assertion, "men may change circumstances through revolutionary practice" (ibid.).

4.7 Conclusion

The continuity between the interpretation of Lacan and the selected aspects of the view of ideology given here will be briefly summarized in this section. Their relation to signifying practice was demonstrated in the preceding section to be continuous. In the section on the constitution of the subject, too, it became clear that Lacan's view is consistent with the view on ideology put forward here. It is in addition clear from that section that ideology has material effects on people, at least insofar as it contributes to the constitution of their subjectivity and hence to their capacity to think, speak and act meaningfully. This conception of ideology is therefore again in accord with Lacan's view that language is not simply the bearer of communications which impinge on the subject, but is at the heart of the very constitution of the subject of desire: language is involved in the construction of that which receives or gives the communication which is merely the consciously experienced contribution of language. Finally, the signification of naturality by ideology is consistent with the way in which Lacan sees the operation of the "I" of the énoncé.

This consistency of the two approaches is sufficient for our purposes. It may be noted, however, that it may be argued that "it is only psychoanalysis which has gone any way to analysing

the formation of the subject which receives its specific subjectivity in the work of ideology" (Coward & Ellis, op. cit., p.69).

5. THE GAY PREDICAMENT

The acquisition of sexual orientation is not at issue in this thesis. The question asked here is why it is that in certain cultures the acquisition of a particular kind of sexual orientation, once it is already established, should present extreme problems of self-acceptance and of acceptance of others.

This chapter will argue that a crucial part or level of the explanation may be found in the operation of ideology in these cultures, and in the way in which the individual's desire impells him/her to collude with that ideological operation.

For reasons outlined in previous chapters, the conceptions of ideological operations and of the operation of desire used here will be those of Barthes and some of the post-Althusserians in the former case and of Lacan in the latter.

5.1 The Problem : Why is Homophobia an Issue at all?

It is clear from Lacan's account of the constitution of the subject in the imaginary and symbolic registers that méconnaissance is an indispensable prerequisite for the formation of a human subject. This applies no matter how non-neurotic, how "healthy" a person may be. "Our experience shows (that)...the function of méconnaissance... characterizes the ego in all its structures" (Lacan, 1977a, p.6, insertion added). Speaking of the mirror stage in which the foundations of the subject's constitution are laid, and of its consequences after entry into the symbolic, Lacan states that a méconnaissance is the basis of the ego, and will always remain so;

> This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infans stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject... But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being (le devenir) of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality (ibid., p.2, emphasis in original).

The way one lives one's life has constant characteristics only in consequence of an imaginary méconnaissance, "by which he transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nonetheless intermittent" (ibid., pp.312-313).

One's very ability to act deliberately and purposefully in the world at all is dependent on the méconnaissance of the age. "The passionate desire peculiar to man to

impress his image in reality is the obscure basis of the rational mediations of the will" (ibid., p.22). And "this formal fixation...is the very condition that extends indefinitely his world and his power, by giving his objects their instrumental polyvalence and symbolic polyphony, and also their potential as defensive armour" (ibid., p.17).

Furthermore, the subject, as argued in Chapter Three, no matter how healthy, moral or decent, is triply trapped with a double desperation in an impossible quest. And this impossible quest, for a permanently lost object which cannot be abandoned, has an influence on every aspect of the individual's life (Freud, 1908, p.198; Lacan, 1977a, p.172).

It follows, therefore, that, where everyone lives as a méconnaissance, it is meaningless for an individual deciding on lifestyle to speak of others' judgments of right and wrong ways to live as being more adequate than one's own, or, for that matter, less adequate. For one is then saying that that which is born of one very complex and fundamental misrecognition has more truth value than that which is born of another similar misrecognition.

It is of course possible to establish criteria by which the truth values of differing judgments can be evaluated relative to each other. But this misses the point at issue, which is that the negative judgment in some cultures on homosexuality has an emotional impact of such power as to bring about brutal material effects on many lives. And there is the correlative point that that particular

negative judgment is held with tremendous tenacity by the large majority of people in such cultures, to the point where violent action may be taken to implement it. Some of the large body of literature supporting this statement was cited in the Introduction (e.g. Bullough, 1979, chaps. Three and Seven; Hart & Richardson, 1981, pp.41-45; Plummer, 1975).

The question, then, is why it is that there should be such a prevalent feeling in some cultures, of such force, that homosexuality is abominable. And why it is that many, if not all, homosexuals themselves are impelled to repudiate this aspect themselves, at some stage of their lives, with the same force or more.

5.2 First Approaches

This section will present a brief account of homophobia which is not the account offered by this thesis. This alternative analysis is given to suggest the complexity of the issues involved in explaining homophobia. It will also help to pinpoint the contribution made to the explanation of homophobia by the use of the present framework.

Clearly, part of the explanation for the powerful aversion to homosexuality must lie in the way in which human subjects are constituted. It must lie, that is, in the mutual operation of desire and language on the infant.

As outlined in Chapter Three (p.66), Lacan holds that the ego consists in a misrecognition of a unification

of the subject's characteristics. This misrecognition is built first on the identification with the coherent image of the subject perceived in mirrors or in others, during the mirror stage, and secondly on an identification with the signifier "I", which, as argued in Chapter Three, gives the illusion of signifying a consistent being. Furthermore, this imaginary ego is invested by the subject's desire with a double desperation and a triple captation. This multiple trap, it was argued at the end of Chapter Three, involves on the one hand an impossible quest to be the mother's complementary object, and on the other hand the impossibility of relinquishing that futile quest since it has been repressed into the unconscious, and so made eternal (Freud, 1915b). The subject cannot help therefore but cling to an image of him/herself as a consistent being, a coherent unity, harbouring no fundamental contradictions.

Homosexuality, however, is construed in the relevant cultures as a contradictory way of being to hetero-sexuality, which in turn is automatically and emphatically expected to become part of each person's way of relating to others. This observation is easily confirmed (e.g. Hart & Richardson, op. cit., pp.93-110). To explain this is not within the bounds of this thesis.

Homosexuals, too, are different from any other oppressed group at least in that they can "pass" as heterosexual, and in that their defining characteristic is to be found in a large proportion of those who claim to be different from them, as shown by, inter alia, the Kinsey reports

(1948 and 1952). "Ultimately homosexuals are a minority quite unlike any other, for we are a part of all humans - not metaphorically...but actually" (Altman, 1971, p.236). Consequently a gay person is likely to enhance by his/her example the possibility of other people's recognising their own repressed or suppressed homosexual feelings. These feelings or potential feelings are likely to have been excluded by the subject from among the characteristics of his/her ego, as being contradictory to the heterosexuality which is emphatically expected to be there. Thus an evocation of them in the subject by another is likely to threaten the desperately desired coherent outlines of the ego, and hence the possibility of fulfilling the desire for the mother's desire. This would account for the power of the reaction to homosexuals.

The same reasoning could be applied to the gay person's self-rejection. But it then needs to be explained why other characteristics, for whatever reason not anticipated to be within or predicable of the ego, do not bear a comparable degree of threat when recognised to be present in the subject. Few people, for example, are deeply perturbed at the thought that other people might be extroverted where they themselves are introverted. Nor is it common for a person who has always perceived him/herself as primarily attracted to blond people to spend years coming to terms with the fact that she/he is gradually finding dark-haired people just as attractive.

Clearly the explanation for the effect of the prohibition on homosexuality cannot lie simply in a threat to the imaginary coherence of the ego. Nor is it sufficient to point out that it is forbidden, and is therefore not comparable to the examples above, for it is the powerful effect of that prohibition that we are attempting to explain, given that it is already there. There must be an additional factor specific to homosexuality or at least specific to a limited set of attributes which includes homosexuality.

This point can be made clearer by a few intuitively accessible examples. It is obvious that there will usually be different responses to the following statements. It should be taken that they are made in common social intercourse, as to someone met casually at a dinner party, as opposed to in exceptional circumstances like talking to a therapist or to a self-accepting homosexual.

These are the statements: "My sister is very selfish by nature, but she compensates for it very well", as opposed to "My sister is homosexual but compensates for it very well". Or, "My son is socially very insecure/neurotic but manages to establish relationships that satisfy him", as opposed to "My son is homosexual but manages to establish relationships that satisfy him". Or "I refuse to become sexually involved with someone who is not a member of my religious group/colour", as opposed to "I refuse to become sexually involved with someone who is not of my sex".

The reactions to the second statement in each case are far more likely to include degrees of shock than are reactions

to the first statement. There is, indeed, a comic element to them, just because they are statements unlikely to be made in conventional social settings. Homosexuality displays a difference from other attributions of negative qualities, of qualities of social or psychological handicap, and from other categorisations of human type. This difference requires explanation.

It will be argued in the next section that the operation of ideology provides the missing explanatory element.

5.3 The Operation of Ideology

It is pertinent here to remember an earlier point:

> The understanding of the subject in signification produced by both Marxism and psychoanalysis suggests the necessity of seeing the sign as only one moment in the process of signification. It is the moment which produces and fixes meaning but it is not an absolute, pre-given relation. It is the sign, the relation between signifier and signified, which is fixed in the construction of positions for the predicating subject. Such an understanding emphasises the activity of the signifier, whose limitation to produce certain signifieds therefore becomes a question of positionality in sociality and social relations. (Coward & Ellis, 1977, p.122).

As argued earlier, one consequence of this fixing of the relations between signifier and signified is that the signified appears to have an existence or being which is independent of its production by the activity of the signifier. It becomes seen as a ding an sich, not produced as what it has become, but an essential being.

In other words, again as argued earlier, it is one of the fundamental qualities of ideological discourse that it represents what has been historically acquired as natural, that is as being timeless, without origin, of necessity and by definition the only way of being possible, and therefore not requiring or indeed not even susceptible of explanation. That which is described by ideological discourse as natural is thus an essence, not a structure or a position in a structure. As Barthes puts it, in "the bourgeois ideology...the process through which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature...: man as represented by it is universal, eternal...: bourgeois ideology yields an unchangeable nature" (1972a, pp.141-142). And Coward and Ellis speak of

> The production of an ideological vraisemblable which is effective precisely for the reason that it appears as "natural", "the way things are"...The practice of ideology has succeeded when it has produced this "natural attitude", when for example the existing relations of power are not only accepted but perceived precisely as the way things are, ought to be,

and will be (op. cit., pp.67-68).

This of course immediately constitutes a contradiction immanent in ideology, for the phenomena of human culture are all historically developed, in few of an infinity of possible contradictory directions, including the phenomenon of ideology itself. In Althusser's words,

> ideologies...have a history, whose determination in the last instance is clearly situated outside ideologies alone, although it involves them (1971a, p.150).

and,

> what seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who live in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology; one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology (ibid., pp.163-164).

That very cultural product which attempts, and so often succeeds in its attempt, to disguise the fact of history, is itself a product of that fact.

And, insofar as ideology aims to present the world in a certain light, it casts a shadow on certain phenomena and viewpoints - it is selective in its representation

of the world. It is contradictory, too, therefore, because it attempts to disguise its selectivity, the fact that it constructs its signifieds in a particular way.

It is these contradictions in language qua ideology which, it is argued here, collude with the operation of desire to bring about the predicament of the gay individual, constituted as she/he is in the language in which ideology is inscribed.

Clearly, in the process of signifying its signifieds as natural, the ideological discourse as a whole becomes a signifier of naturality, over and above whatever else it signifies. And of course there is a particular signifier within the discourse of the same concept, the word "natural" itself. While this word "natural" may be employed independently of the analogous deployment of the whole discourse, it is always backed up by the whole weight of that discourse's signification of naturality, simply by virtue of this latter's ubiquity.

This dual mode of signifying naturality multiplies the possibilities for contradiction in this connection in the operation of ideology.

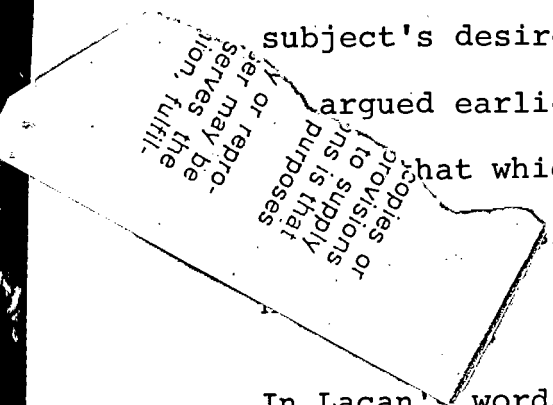
"Natural", like any other signifier, only bears meaning by virtue of its difference from an oppositional term, in this case "unnatural". To put this less technically, ideology can only be selective or inclusive at the cost of excluding. In this case, moreover, it is an exclusion from "the way things are, ought to be and will be". Such

an exclusion, when it is both effective and contradictory, must lay the foundation for powerful effects on those who live in and through it.

It will be the aim of the next section to explain why that exclusion is in fact effective, given that it is already operating, and of the next section to elaborate the effects of its contradictions as outlined above.

5.4 The Operation of Desire

The explanation for the emotional effectiveness of ideological exclusion from what is "natural" follows readily from Lacan's account of the constitution of the subject. As Lacan argues, the individual is constituted in language. Given that ideology may be seen as one level of analysis of language (Chapter Four, section 4.2), the subject is therefore constituted in ideology. And this constitution in language and hence in ideology as argued at the end of Chapter Three and referred to above (Section 5.2) is clung to with a double desperation and a triple captation. The subject's desire motivates this entrapment of the subject and it invests the imaginary ego with the same desperation and captation in the same process, since the ego is identified with the "I" of speech. "This imaginary process...begins with the specular image and goes on to the constitution of the ego by way of subjectification by the signifier" (Lacan, 1977a, p.307).



And the characteristics of the ego, with which the subject's desire has so irreversibly invested it, are, argued earlier, precisely those of an essential hat which can be the object of the mother's imply is what it is, "an unchangeable

In Lacan's words, there is "that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the Gestalten that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field" (1977a, p.17).

The operation of desire, therefore, has an aim which coincides exactly with that of the operation of ideology, that is, to assert the essential nature of the subject. That is, precisely that the subject is natural. The ideological signification of naturality will therefore be clung to by the subject with all the impetus of her/his deepest desire.

Consequently, should the ideological discourse contrive to signify a characteristic or predicate as unnatural - that is, as changeable, not permanently consistent, not an eternal essence - the subject cannot help but repudiate any participation on its part in that characteristic or predicate, and repudiate it with all the force of its desire.

It is in the operation of desire, therefore, that an explanation for the powerful psychological effects of

exclusion from naturality by ideology is to be found.

5.5 The Nature of the Effects of the Operations of Ideology and Desire

In the operations of both desire and ideology, it follows from the above arguments, an impossibly contradictory assertion is made, that of the eternal consistency of the individual as ego. In both operations the subject's definition only as difference in a synchronous network of signifiers (as argued in Chapter Three, section 3.3) is denied, and a positive essence asserted in its place. And in both operations the subject's definition as changing contextually according to its position in the syntagmatic chain of signifiers, and as developing from a zero point in specific ways (argued in Chapter Three, Section 3.3)[9], is denied, and a consistent, eternal essence asserted in its place. Synchrony and diachrony, therefore, are both denied in the operations of both ideology and desire, each of which itself operates only by signification, of which synchrony and diachrony are constitutive.

9. "Further reflection tells us that the adult's ego feeling cannot have been the same from the beginning. It must have gone through a process of development, which cannot, of course, be demonstrated but which admits of being constructed with a fair degree of probability" (Freud, 1930, p.66).

> A language, Saussure says, "is a system of pure values which are determined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms" (Course, 80; Cours, 116). Because the language is a wholly historical entity, always open to change, one must focus on the relations which exist in a particular synchronic state if one is to define its elements. (Culler, 1976, p.36).

This double denial is effected by the signifying of naturity. The contradiction it constitutes, then, is the contradiction which was referred to above as bringing about the predicament of the gay individual. This assertion will now be elaborated.

Ideological discourse, it has been argued above, operates as the signifier "natural": it disguises its signifieds universally as bearing that characteristic. Consequently, the "I" spoken by the individual, occupying as it does a place in linguistic discourse, must participate in signifying its signified, in this case the subject, as bearing that characteristic of naturality, timelessness, ahistoricity, not having an origin requiring or even susceptible of explanation. The subject of the énoncé, that is, must signify the subject of the énonciation as natural, simply by virtue of its existence as a subject of speech. This applies not only despite the potentially contradictory positions the subject may occupy in discourse, but precisely to deny such a possibility of contradiction.

And, on the psychoanalytic side of the coin, the subject's desire is doubly and triply impelled to invest the subject with the same signification of naturality or essentiality: the ego is imagined to be the subject.

It follows from both the ideological and psychoanalytic perspectives that the only tenable position for the subject is to experience as natural whatever is signified by the discourse she/he is constituted by. This applies more particularly to characteristics predicable of the subject or, more accurately, of the ego, which is taken for the subject - characteristics such as gay or straight.

It will, of course, appear peculiar to state that an attribute like "gay" must be experienced as natural. But this is the crux of the contradictory position the gay subject experiences, and, it will be argued here, it is a realisation without which the gay predicament cannot be clearly understood. The rest of the thesis will attempt to show that this way of conceiving the operation of ideology on homosexuality brings great clarity to the understanding of homophobia. This appears to be an original conception, which follows logically from the present view on ideology. Its usefulness and consistency should emerge in the following pages.

It follows clearly from the preceding pages that since gayness is signified by ideological discourse, it must be signified as natural in the same way as everything else signified by such discourses, that is, through the

"fixing" by the signifier of the signified as an essential thing-in-itself. This meaning of naturality is that on the basis of which the argument up to now has been conducted: that is, timelessness, essentiality, insusceptibility of explanation.

Two vital sets of contradictions ensue from this, which will be elaborated in the rest of this chapter. Firstly, the gay subject is signified as natural as well as unnatural in the same respect. The signifier "unnatural" is made to operate on gayness by the cultures in question, so that its meaning is produced as both and simultaneously natural (by the operation of the discourse as a whole), and unnatural (by the operation of a specific signifier). Secondly, the gay subject is signified as natural in two mutually exclusive respects. She/he is signified as an essence by the "I" of ideological discourse, a signification supported by the méconnaissance of the imaginary ego, which is identified with the "I" of speech with all the passion of the subject's desire. And she/he is also signified as gay. This signification of gayness is, like all other significations within the ideological discourses in question, additionally a signification of naturality. But, because gayness is simultaneously signified as unnatural by other ideological discursive operations, while the essence signified by "I" is unambivalently signified as natural, the subject is operated on by two antithetical signifiers of naturality at once.

No attempt will be made in this thesis to explain comprehensively why the gay/straight opposition is linked

with the unnatural/natural opposition. The place of economic and political practices in this begs to be researched in a first approach to answering that question, and such research falls too far out of the psychological scope of this work. It will be taken as sufficient here that the signifier "unnatural" is made to operate effectively on gayness. The deployment of naturality and unnaturality by ideology and the knotting of this deployment with libidinal desire is taken here as the starting point of an explanation and an elaboration, an explanation of the powerful emotional effects of the prohibition and exclusion of gayness and an elaboration of the nature of these effects.

To continue, then, it is clear that the gay individual is interpellated into two sets of contradictory subject-positions in the discourse that constitutes her/him. And each being a position in which the subject's desire is captivated, each is made untenable by the existence of the other. In Lacan's words, "'one cannot serve two masters', that is, one's being cannot conform to two actions that lead in opposite directions" (1977a, p.130).

5.6 Those in Contact with Gay People

Before the gay predicament is further elaborated, it should be explained that the same analysis applies both to those who experience homosexuality in themselves and those who are merely in contact with gay others. This is quite simply because of the centrality of the Other in the Lacanian framework. Or, put more simplistically, this is because of the inescapable identification of a

subject with other subjects. Since this is crucial to the applicability of the present analysis, it will be heavily supported by references to Lacan in this section.

It should be recalled first that

> the mirror stage is a drama...which manufactures for the subject...the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality...and an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development (Lacan, 1977a, p.4).

The mechanism of this process is explained as follows: "We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification...: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (ibid., p.2). The product of this identification is, of course, the ego that is so vital to the achievement of the primal desire, recognition as the object of the mother's desire, and any threat to which ego consequently has such powerful effects.

Furthermore, the

> moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the imago of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy...the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations.

> It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others (ibid., p.5).

This moment, too, because of the importance to the subject of the ego's apparent consistency,

> turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger, even though it should correspond to a normal maturation - the very normalization of this maturation being henceforth dependent, in man, on a cultural mediation (ibid., pp.5-6).

Thus the consistency of the subject's ego is always to some degree vulnerable to challenge. For "this narcissistic moment in the subject is to be found in all the genetic phases of the individual, in all the degrees of human accomplishment in the person" (ibid., p.24).

And Lacan maintains that one of the sources of aggressivity in people is the unsuccessful rivalry undergone by the infant for the mother's affection and recognition (ibid., pp.19ff.). Thus a threat to the ego's appearance of consistency is precisely suited to evoking aggression - a frequent response to homosexuals.

The subject, then, its understanding of the world and of itself mediated through the desire of the other,

and its objects constituted "by the co-operation of others" (ibid., p.5), is always to some degree dependent on identification with others to confirm that vital essential nature of his/her ego, its identity. And others are then in a position to evoke primordial emotions in the subject by disconfirming her/his essentiality. For in "the notion of an aggressivity linked...to the structures of systematic méconnaissance and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego" (ibid., p.21), "we can see the subjective function of identification operate" (ibid.). Even the statement "'I'm a man...can at most mean no more than, 'I'm like he whom I recognize to be a man, and so recognize myself as being such'. In the last resort, these various formulas are to be understood only in reference to the truth of 'I is an other'" (ibid., 23). All through life the subject needs the identificatory confirmation of others to maintain the méconnaissance of the ego.

It is therefore understandable that when another individual embodies an inconceivable representation of human nature, as is done by making the unnatural visible, that confirmation via identification is undermined, challenged and threatened and it follows that primordial emotions may be evoked in consequence. Furthermore, it follows from the above discussion that subject in contact with gay others, be it directly, or through conversation, or through the media, may well enter, vicariously and by identification, into what has been analysed here as the gay predicament. This

will become clearer in what follows immediately below.

This process of identification has been discussed so far more clearly in terms of the imaginary than the symbolic. An understanding of the relation of the preceding discussion to the symbolic presents no difficulties, however, since the "I" of the symbolic discourse designates the subject insofar as it is misrecognised as the imaginary ego. "This imaginary process...begins with the specular image and goes on to the constitution of the ego by way of subjectification by the signifier" (ibid., p.307).

The subject's identification, it may therefore be said, "will always be an identification with signifiers" (ibid., p.256), as Lacan says of the patient in analysis. That is, given that the subject is "a subject defined only as a locus of relationships" (Wilden, 1968, p.182), which is precisely how a signifier is defined, it follows that the subject in contact with gay other subjects may come to occupy similar positions in discourse to those occupied by these gay others.

> This concerns a quite different function from that of the primary identification referred to above, for it does not involve the assumption by the subject of the insignia of the other, but rather the condition that the subject has to find the constituting structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of the signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him (Lacan, 1977a, p.264).

Thus the same analysis applies to the homophobia experienced by those in direct or indirect contact with gays as to the homophobia experienced by gays themselves. And an additional component of

aggressivity may be attributed to the reaction of those in contact with gay others. Indeed, research may show that the depression of those newly realising their own homosexuality may derive in part from the same source of aggressivity.

5.7 Elaboration of the Contradictory Effects

The first set of contradictions arises from the simultaneous signification of gayness as natural and unnatural. Being natural, gayness has no origin, no history; it is a timeless essence and therefore requires no explanation. But, being unnatural, it does require to be explained, to be put into relation to that which the ideological discourse has signified as eternal and the only way to be.

This last is in a sense a definitional consequence of the existence of such a category as naturality at all. If a certain way of being is the only way of being, then it follows that any other way of being excluded therefrom can only have a meaning, can only be conceived, if its exclusive otherness is only apparent, so that in reality it is only a deviation from the only way to be, bearing a definite relation to it. And an explanation for the deviation can then be sought by adducing an extraneous cause or influence which accounts for the apparent otherness, the apparent exclusivity, of the alternative way of being. The essentiality of the natural way of being is thus vindicated. An example of such an explanatory process in the case of homosexuality is the principle that gays are in fact afraid of members of the opposite sex, (Socarides, 1979, 1981) and that this extra factor sufficiently explains their deviation from heterosexuality which is in reality hidden at their core. The fact of being positively drawn to members of the same sex

is rendered insignificant: the extra explanatory factor of (negative) fear serves to negate the unnatural attraction. The existence of the unnatural attraction is thereby masked.

It is important to be clear that the issue here is not whether the "natural" way of being, in this case heterosexuality, is in fact being deviated from, but that the explanatory process outlined above serves to vindicate the implications of the way of being's having been signified as natural in the first place. It is not at issue here whether the explanations are correct or not. What is at issue is the ideological operation which occurs in the search for explanation, over and above the scientific value of the search.

To return, then, gayness, being both natural and unnatural, is both insusceptible of explanation and in need of explanation. And the pun on "need" is more than co-incidental. For the gay subject's desire is most deeply invested in the imaginary consistency, essentiality, coherence of his/her ego, as elaborated in earlier chapters. And now the "I" of the symbolic register, the register of ideological discourse, with which that ego is identified and knotted with all the strength of the multiple desperation and captation of desire elaborated earlier, is signifying a subject which is unnatural - inessential, not existing in the only way there is to exist, not conceivable as a coherent, consistent being at all. Thus, for the gay individual, all her/his desire (ultimately to be the essential object of the mother's desire) impells a repudiation of the unnatural signification operating on her/his gayness, a drawing of it into relation with what is natural about the subject signified by "I", an explanation of it.

But it cannot be, as long as the subject is bound in such a kind of ideological discourse. For since gayness is also signified as natural, and therefore insusceptible of explanation, it can never be drawn into explanatory relation with anything else. An essence need not bear any relation, indeed cannot bear any relation, to any other essence. And we have no criteria for deciding whether in any given case it does or does not, so that it would be a meaningless proposition even to think.

This Wittgensteinian point is by no means an abstraction, but rather strikes at the root of the matter. As Wittgenstein himself says, it is not "that human agreement decides what is true and what is false" - "it is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life" (1958, 88^{e}). Or, to make a more properly appropriate Lacanian point, it is crucial to remember throughout the following chapters that the subject is constituted in every way homologous to a signifier. And if the subject is not indeed itself precisely a signifier (an important "if" - the ambiguity is perhaps indispensably valuable to the Lacanian discourse/theory), it is so inextricably bound up with the ways of operating and being operated upon of the signifier, that language and its operations are at the very heart of desire. Thus the above discussion, of explanation as applied to homosexuality, is far from "merely" a conceptual point, for the operation of concepts is most firmly tied to the operation of desire.

As Lacan puts it, "The use of the Word requires vastly more vigilance in the science of man than it does anywhere else, for it engages in it the very being of its object" (quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.viii). And if homophobia can be regarded as a symptom or

collection of symptoms (and even common speech can be so regarded, states Freud, 1907, p.85) and "if the symptom can be read, it is because it is already itself inscribed in a process of writing. Insofar as a particular formation of the unconscious, it is not a signification, but its relation to a signifying structure which determines it. If I may be permitted a play on words, I would say that it is always a question of the agreement of the subject with the verbe". (Lacan, quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.116).

The imaginary ego of the gay person, then, and the desire that so fully invests it, are trapped by the operation of ideology, its fixing of particular significations, into negating their very raison d'etre in the process of, as always, affirming it.

It is in reacting to the possibility of this predicament, I would suggest, that the homophobe too abominates homosexuals.

To summarise, insofar as gayness is at all coherently signified, it is signified as being naturally unnatural, that is, eternally in need of explanation, a requirement which clearly cannot be met. The gay person, his/her desire colluding as it does with the operations of ideological discourse, is placed in an untenable emotional contradiction.

And others, reacting to gays, find and accept contradictory explanations: homosexuality is a sickness, but nonetheless morally reprehensible; it is genetic, but nonetheless licentious; it is definable only in terms of sexual acts with other people of the same sex, but nonetheless indicates inadequacy of the person's character traits in general; homosexuals are degenerate, but nonetheless no different (Chesebro, 1980).

This elaboration has applied to the first set of contradictions arising from the signification of naturality, that is, the signification of gayness as both natural and unnatural. The second set of contradictions mentioned earlier consists in the signification of the subject as natural in two mutually exclusive respects, that is, as an essence signified by "I" and supported by the méconnaissance of the imaginary ego, identified as it is with the "I" of speech, and as gay, which happens to be a predicate of that "I".

As is clear from the above discussions, the gay person is signified as natural by the signifier "I" in the same way that all signifiers in the ideological discourses being considered fix their signifieds as being natural, essential things-in-themselves. This means that the subject is signified as being timeless, ahistorical, insusceptible of explanation. And she/he is naturally gay, which is equally insusceptible of explanation. But gayness is also placed in the unnatural camp, so that it and that which is signified by "I" are mutually exclusive. The subject is in this way placed in a contradiction for which resolution cannot even be begun to be attempted. For two essences, as argued above, can never be brought into explanatory relation with each other.

This, viewed more emphatically from the psychoanalytic perspective, means that the subject's desire is trapped with equal passion in two brutally contradictory positions. For the imaginary ego, misrecognised as an essential being with all the passion of desire, is identified with the "I" which operates in the ideological discourse also to signify an essential being. And the predicates of the ego, including gayness, are similarly

invested by desire in a misrecognition of essentiality or naturality, as well as similarly operating as ideological signifiers of essentiality. Once the subject is committed to being two irreconcilably different essences, it cannot be such an object as the mother might recognise as the object of her desire. The possibility of being recognised as either of the two objects the subject's desire commits it to being, is contradicted by the mere existence of the other object which the subject's desire commits it to being. So that the linguistic point made in the preceding paragraph is also properly a psychoanalytic one.

5.8 A Review in terms of Diachrony and Synchrony

It was argued in section 3.5 that the contradictions implicit in the denial of synchrony and diachrony in the operations both of ideology and of desire lie at the centre of the gay predicament. It will be useful to recall that viewpoint at this stage of the discussion.

The signifiers of ideological discourse signify their signifieds as essences, by fixing them and concealing their production by the signifiers. That is, as argued in an earlier chapter, the construction of both signifiers and signifieds by difference alone - in other words, synchrony - is denied. And the production of synchronic networks in history - that is, diachrony - is denied in the same signification of essentiality or naturality. This applies, of course, to all significations of the subject, including "I" and, in the case under discussion, "gay".

The denial of synchrony becomes clear at the point where the gayness of the subject is signified as naturally unnatural. And

the denial of diachrony becomes clear at the point where the subject is signified as natural - ahistorical - in two mutually exclusive respects which cannot, because of their naturality, be drawn into any relation with each other. The denial of synchrony and that of diachrony are of course mutually implicit. They are two approaches of analysis to the same object, language, not two distinct properties of that object.

Viewing this again from the more emphatically psychoanalytic perspective, the desire-impelled subject already denies synchrony in the misrecognition of the ego as a positive essence, and not as constituted only by difference and by the identification of the ego with the ideological signifier "I". And diachrony, the historicity of the ego, is denied in the same operation of desire.

And, again, the subject's desire is caught up in language with a multiple desperation and captation (argued at the end of Chapter Three, and briefly re-defined above, section 5.2), precisely in order to assert that same essentiality of the subject, that same denial of synchrony and diachrony, that constitutes the méconnaissance of the imaginary ego. The desire-impelled subject must, therefore, resist unveiling that double denial perpetrated by ideological discourse, as its own ego would be called radically into question, and with it the very feasibility of its desire.

Thus the subject, constituted in synchrony and diachrony like the discourse in which that constitution occurred, colludes with ideology in the double denial implicit in the representation of their own ahistoricity and essentiality.

In this double denial, crucial and even definitive in the operations

of desire and ideology, each of these last lays the seeds of its own undermining in the moment of its birth. The subject, in the momentum of its very attempt to establish its coherence, fragments itself further. The repression of diachrony and synchrony is followed in the economy of structures by the return of the repressed in a compromise of oppositional terms, at the point where the psychological and ideological lose distinction.[10] The progeny of the lack in which desire is constituted are, it seems, inevitably echoes of the fragmented body.

5.9 Some Suggested Elaborations of Naturality/Unnaturality

The preceding analysis has been undertaken in terms of naturality and unnaturality as linked simply to heterosexuality and homosexuality respectively. The link between the two pairs of terms is, however, more complex than this. One crucial example is that heterosexuality is linked to a certain set of configurations of gender/sex categories. These may be seen to be biological sex, gender identity, gender role, and sexual behaviour and orientation (De Cecco, 1981; Marshall, 1981, pp.134ff., slightly modified; Shively & De Cecco, 1977). "Now it is quite clear that even in the present day these components are often assumed to be logically linked...It is this pattern of expectations which produces a particular definition of the norm" (Marshall, 1981, p.134).

10. "We shall not be wrong, perhaps, in saying that the weak point in the ego's organization seems to lie in its attitude to the sexual function, as though the biological antithesis between self-preservation and the preservation of the species had found a psychological expression at that point" (Freud, 1940, p.186).

This is clear in the case of biological sex and gender role, where certain behaviours are usually expected of men, by themselves and others, and equally certain limited and different behaviours are expected of women (Cohen, 1973; Frieze & Ramsay, 1976; Larson, 1981; Miller, 1973; Pleck, 1976; Rebecca, Hefner & Oleshansky, 1976; Shively, Rudolph & De Cecco, 1978; Stoller, 1973). This difference in masculine and feminine behaviours is part of what is generally taken as natural in heterosexuals. Rebecca, Hefner, and Oleshansky (1976) make a representative statement: "a polarized oppositional view of sex roles...characterizes many individuals and institutions today, and is regarded as the end point in much scientific work on sex roles" (p.197).

From a purely psychoanalytic viewpoint, these distinctions are not natural, but are constructed in the individual's course of development, as is everything else human about her/him. Apart from which, the evidence is overwhelming that gender roles and gender identity are not linked to biological sex naturally. In addition, masculinity and femininity appear not to be opposed dimensions: one can be both and simultaneously highly feminine and highly masculine, or vice-versa (Freund, Nagler & Langevin; Larson, 1981; Oldham, Farnill & Ball, 1982; Shively & De Cecco, 1977; Shively, Rudolph & De Cecco, 1978; Storms, 1980; Zajai & Steiner, 1974).

Homosexuality, of course, contradicts the assumption that these gender/sex categories are naturally all linked in the stereotypical configurations, by contradicting the gender role that "naturally goes with" the homosexual's biological sex. And gays do this in a most fundamental way - by sexually desiring the

category of person "naturally" desired only by one of the opposite biological sex to themselves. Thus part of homophobia is evoked by that specific aspect of homosexuality, the unconventionality of gender roles and behaviour (Laner & Laner, 1980; Larson, 1981; Millham & Weinberger, 1977; Weinberger & Millham, 1979).

It should be added that homosexuality is abhorred for broader reasons than this alone; the homosexual orientation evokes negative reactions distinct from reactions to gender unconventionality (Goodyear, Abadie & Barquest, 1981; Laner & Laner, 1979, 1980; McDonald, 1982; Storms, 1978; Weinberger & Millham, 1979).

Thus the above analysis of the gay predicament could be considerably extended by analysing the detailed ways in which homosexuality/heterosexuality are linked to unnaturality/naturality. Presumably there are many more dimensions to be considered than the gender/sex categories. Further research will need to be undertaken to specify them and think through their implications. The present conceptualisation of the operation of the natural/unnatural opposition will still apply as a broader context within which to situate such analyses. They may therefore be integrated into the understanding developed in this thesis.

5.10 Summary

The above argument may be summarised in the abstract as follows. That which is fundamental to the operation of ideology, that is the positing of essence or nature, is also fundamental to the operation of desire. The operation of ideology and that of desire occur and are knotted in the same discourses. Fundamental

contradictions in ideology are therefore also fundamental contradictions in desire. The gay predicament is the consequence of such a fundamental contradiction. The effects on gays of this contradiction can be further articulated by analysing the continuity between the operation of desire and that of ideology.

It may be added, by way of conclusion, that this continuity of the two operations ultimately comes down to Freud's formulation: "For society must take as one of its most important educative tasks to tame and restrict the sexual instinct when it breaks out as an urge to reproduction, and to subject it to an individual will which is identical with the bidding of society" (1916-1917, p.311).

6 THE CHANGE FROM ABHORRENCE TO ACCEPTANCE

The gay subject who is not self-accepting with respect to her/his being gay, it was concluded in the last chapter, suffers by virtue of occupying irreconcilably contradictory positions in ideological discourse. The ways in which these contradictory positions articulate with one another may be specified with precision, as was done in that chapter. It is indisputable that some or many gays and some or many of those in contact with them reach and maintain a state in which they no longer experience an abhorrence of homosexuality in any degree comparable to their former experience of abhorrence. Clearly, the process of changing from the homophobia explained by the articulation of irreconcilably contradictory positions, to the acceptance of homosexuality, must involve a change to occupying relatively non-contradictory positions in ideological discourse. This can only be achieved by altering the discourse in some way, since the méconnaissance of the ego is inescapable for the human subject.

This chapter attempts to elaborate in what ways the ideological discourse inhabited by gays and those in contact with them must be changed as the subjects in question come to occupy non-contradictory discursive positions, and how the commitments of their desire relate to these changes. In order to do this it will be useful to establish the relevant limits within which it is possible for change to occur, both for desire and for ideological discourse, and the first sections will be devoted to this consideration.

6.1 The Limits of Change with Respect to Desire

This section will argue that the subject's desire cannot abandon the méconnaissance that is the ego, and hence cannot abandon the consequent méconnaissance of naturality. This will be argued on the grounds that: human beings are inconceivable without the ego; there is in any event a very strong motivation to cling to the misrecognition of the subject's being that the ego is; and abandoning that misrecognition would not resolve the gay predicament anyway.

It is not possible to consider a human being without an imaginary ego, with all the characteristics of méconnaissance and the imaginary mode of relating attributed to the ego by Lacan. The imaginary ego is an essential prerequisite for human existence, since it is the basis for all the identifications which make possible the complete entry into language, via the subject's use of "I" to designate itself. The "assumption of his specular image by the child...would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form...This form...will also be the source of secondary identifications, under which term I would place the functions of libidinal normalization" (Lacan, 1977a, p.2). The later identifications (for instance with the father or mother) cannot take place without the prior existence of this ego deriving from identification with the mirror image, because, as Lacan points out, the subject cannot even conceive of the father as a rival for the mother, as someone who may conceivably be identified with as a

route to the mother, unless the subject has first been in a position in which rivalry is meaningful.

This position occurs when the subject identifies with the unitary mirror image, opposed as it is to the infant's own bodily discord. The infant thus becomes a rival to itself, and is then in a position to know a rival in another and identify with that rival as a means to obtaining their mutual object: "it is clear that the structural effect of identification with the rival is not self-evident, except at the level of fable, and can only be conceived of if the way is prepared for it by a primary identification that structures the subject as a rival with himself" (ibid., p.22). In addition,

> as one recognizes oneself in an external mirrored image, this mirror-self is also an object in space. The specular capture of oneself in the mirror phase also institutes object relationships, not in the sense of object libido, but in the sense that to have a narcissistically cathected self-object one must posit not only recognition of self but also recognition of object. And this object, this imaginary object, as Lacan would call it, is the ego (Evans, 1979, p.395).

In short, then, human beings are inconceivable without the imaginary ego: it cannot be done away with. "We call ego...this "I" who...opposes its <u>irreducible</u>

inertia of pretences and méconnaissances to the concrete problematic of the realization of the subject" (Lacan, 1977a, p.15, emphasis added).

Furthermore, the subject has very powerful motivations for clinging to the méconnaissance of itself as the coherent, consistent ego (Chapter Three, section 3.1). For "he sees his own image in the mirror at a time when he is capable of perceiving the image as a totality but when he does not feel himself as such but as living rather in that primal incoherence of all his motor and affective functions which lasts for the first six months after birth" (Lacan, 1979, p.423). And these motivations, including that of desiring to be the object of the mother's desire, are repressed deeply into the unconscious, again as described earlier, so that they cannot be recovered to the extent that the misrecognition could be effectively reversed.

> "We...learn that what repression strikes is precisely these phantasies, which constitute the specific sources of our pleasure. Finally we learn that the reality principle is powerless here, that no reality test will correct these phantasies, which thus enjoy an undisputed sway over our existence and over our perception, since repression strikes them even before we have had time to recognise them" (Safouan, 1981, p.77).

The subject's desire, therefore, cannot relinquish the méconnaissance that is the ego, and, as argued above,

if it did it could no longer be said to be a subject of human existence. The pertinent consequence of this is that human individuals cannot relinquish the misrecognition of themselves as natural, as such an object as might be recognised by the mother as the object of her desire, with all the qualities of naturality discussed earlier.

Indeed, the essence of the gay predicament is that the imaginary possibility of achieving the subject's desire to be natural is contradicted in ways that trap the subject in the contradiction. Thus the abandonment of the desire to be natural, apart from being impossible, would still contradict the possibility of achieving that desire and so would involve terrors at least as great as those of the gay predicament itself. The path to self-acceptance, or to acceptance of gay others, could not, therefore, involve the abandonment of the desire for naturality, even if this were possible.

If the gay individual is to resolve the contradictions in which she/he is placed by the signification of naturality, then, she/he must still occupy positions in discourse in which his/her desire for naturality can still operate.

Thus, as the desire to be natural cannot be abandoned, the other factor understood here to explain the gay predicament must be considered: that is, ideological discourse. It appears that what must change is the commitment of desire to the specific discourses which signify homosexuality as unnatural. That is, a

> Clearly, subcultures are not privileged forms; they do not stand outside the reflexive circuitry of production and reproduction which links together, at least on a symbolic level, the separate and fragmented pieces of the social totality...They also articulate, to a greater or lesser extent, some of the preferred meanings and interpretations, those favoured by and transmitted through the authorized channels of mass communication (Hebdige, 1979, pp.85-86).

Indeed, it is possible that in order for the dominant ideology's signification of naturality to be abolished, even in sub-ideologies within the same social formation as the dominant ideology, all levels of the social formation would have to be revolutionised. The issues involved here are too complex to be dealt with in less than another thesis. It will therefore be taken as beyond the parameters of this thesis to argue the case in which the signification of naturality is altogether abolished.

An additional consideration is that the misrecognised naturality of the ego will militate against the total abolition of the natural signification, as will be briefly elaborated in the next section.

It is, indeed, sufficient that this analysis will apply at least to those people who have reached acceptance of homosexuality while remaining within the province of influence of the dominant ideology such

that naturality is still an ideological signification operating on them.

If different ideological discourses are to be constructed, then, it will be taken that the signification of naturality will persist within them. The achievement of acceptance of homosexuality must nevertheless involve the subject's escape from the occupation of positions in discourse made irreconcilable by the signification of naturality and its inevitable binary opposite, unnaturality. Thus these significations, if they cannot be abolished, must be differently organised in their operation upon the subject. The nature of this reorganisation or rearticulation of the signifying of naturality will be the major concern of this chapter.

It is clear from the chapter on ideology that transformations of discourse are possible in a number of ways. The existence of these possibilities of transformation will be taken for granted throughout the following discussion. A conception of such change which is particularly appropriate in view of the above argument may be recurred to here:

> Together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object

> is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed (Clarke, quoted in Hebdige, op. cit., p.104).

In Lacan's words, "the slightest alteration in the relation between man and the signifier...changes the whole course of history by modifying the moorings that anchor his being" (1977a, p.174).

6.3 The First Possible Change : The Inversion of Ideology

Two broad rearticulations of ideology are suggested by the account of the gay predicament developed in the last chapter. The first involves an inversion of the dominant ideology, so that what was signified as unnatural comes to be signified as natural. The second involves what will be called a particularisation of naturality, such that the individual is signified as natural without requiring the other members of the group or society to be signified as natural in the same respects. This section will descibe the first of these rearticulations in outline, as well as the process of reaching it, and its consequences with respect to the commitments of desire to discourse that the gay predicament involves. Further implications and details of this rearticulation will be elaborated in section 6.5. The second rearticulation of ideological discourse will be described in section 6.4 and elaborated in section 6.6.

The first rearticulation or transformation involves an

inversion of the dominant ideology, so that what was signified as unnatural comes to be signified as natural, in the latter case as emphatically as in the former. This is achieved by reversing the invisibility of homosexuality and the implications of that invisibility. It is a reversal, that is, of what Foucault calls "a sentence to disappear,...an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (1978, p.4). As Hoffman puts it, with respect of homophobia, "Society deals with homosexuality as if it did not exist...We just didn't speak about these things; they were literally unspeakable and so loathsome that nothing could be said in polite society about them" (quoted in Dark, 1971, p.183).

The simple act of meeting in groups of gays or having sustained contact with gays is sufficient to set this reversal and the movement towards acceptance in motion (Dark, 1971; Plummer, 1975, p.148; Troiden, 1979; Weinberg, 1978). For "the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other" (Lacan, 1977a, p.58). Once the subject can be recognized as desirable by others, the possibility of being such an object as the mother might recognise as the object of her desire is at least to some extent restored. This desire for the mother's desire, it may usefully be recalled, is also the desire for recognition by the Other (Chapter Three). The subject has been given by the recognition of others what she/he has been deprived of by the signification of unnaturality. The fact of being signified as unnatural

by the dominant ideology is no longer an exclusive fact. The subject has recourse to an alternative signification, given fundamental efficacy with respect to her/his desire by its embodiment in others, or, more accurately, in the Other (with, perhaps, a smaller O than the Other in which is located the dominant ideology).

> It is the learning of various ideas from other homosexuals that allows the subject to in effect say, "I am homosexual, but not deviant", or, "I am homosexual, but not mentally ill". The cognitive category of homosexual now becomes socially acceptable, and the subject can place himself in that category and yet preserve a sense of his self-esteem or self-worth (Dark, 1971) pp.190-191.

This is supported by Troiden (1979).

Whether these affirming groups need number more than two (as in analyst and patient, for example), or whether they need be in the flesh, as opposed to psychological or symbolic groups, are fascinating questions which must be pursued elsewhere.

To avoid complicating the present train of thoughts with concrete examples, the specific ways in which gays and those in contact with them promote and maintain this inversion of ideology will be discussed in section 6.5.

The degree of change in the subject from abhorrence to acceptance will, therefore, be a function of the degree to which she/he invests his/her desire in the inverted ideological discourse, and to which she/he relinquishes his/her investment of desire in the dominant ideological discourse.

This relative change in investments of desire will in turn be a function of a great number of factors specific to various contexts and to the individuals themselves, such as investments in ethical discourses or familial loyalties. These factors must inevitably partake of investments of desire dependent on individual psychodynamics. Their elaboration is therefore a matter for psychoanalytic research in specific instances, and falls beyond the parameters of this general description, which is in any event concerned with the nature or mechanism of the transformation from abhorrence to acceptance rather than with its causes.

This change can be put in terms of the model of the gay predicament developed in the preceding chapter. Two fundamental contradictions were articulated there as explaining the gay predicament (sections 5.5 and 5.7). The first of these fundamental contradictions is the signification of the subject as both natural and unnatural in respect to the same attribute, that is, being gay. Once that attribute is no longer signified as unnatural, or once the signification of that attribute has lessened force by virtue of the provision of an alternative and efficacious signification of it as natural.

The contradiction of being signified as naturally unnatural is therefore automatically vitiated. The possibility of achieving the object of the subject's desire, recognition by the mother, or the Other, is therefore no longer contradicted by the attribution of homosexuality to the subject. The lessening of the contradiction of this possibility of achieving the object of his/her desire lessens the need to repudiate that contradiction/denial. And, of course, the less gayness is experienced as unnatural, the less the need is to try to make it natural by such devices as explanation or "accounts" (Cass, 1979; Plummer, 1975, p.168). And, equally, its simultaneous signification as natural becomes less and less relevant as a preventative of explanation. The original signification of gayness as (equivocally) natural, that is, becomes a support for the new signification of it as unequivocally natural.

The second fundamental contradiction articulated in the chapter on the gay predicament is that of being signified as natural in two mutually exclusive respects, that is, with respect to being gay, and with respect to being the subject apparently signified by the "I" of the énonce. These were argued to be mutually exclusive because, while the I is signified simply as natural, the gayness is signified as both natural and unnatural. The equivocally natural gayness is therefore irreconcilably opposed to the unequivocally natural I, because of the former's simultaneous unnaturality. It may be noted that, while the first contradiction explaining the gay predicament, discussed in the last paragraph, is an opposition

between two significations of the same type ("natural" and "natural"). This should help to clarify that the second contradiction is not merely the first one rephrased, but a distinct and vital part of the explanation of the gay predicament.

As the subject's desire becomes invested in the inverted ideology, the signification of unnaturality with respect to being gay becomes less effective. In consequence, the signification of gayness becomes increasingly unequivocally natural. The mutual exclusivity of being gay and being the subject designated by the "I" of spoken discourse is therefore progressively undermined. This occurs because that mutual exclusivity, it will be recalled, is based on the signification of gayness as unnatural as well as natural, so that it is opposed to the unequivocally natural signification conferred by "I".

Consequently the subject's desire becomes less and less committed to being two mutually edclusive essential objects. It will be recalled from Chapter Five (section 5.7) that it is the exclusivity of these simultaneous commitments of desire which contradicts that possibility of recognition as <u>the</u> object of the mother's desire. Thus the reduction of that exclusivity restores the possibility of that imaginary achievement, and removes or lessens the need to repudiate the formerly unnaturally natural homosexuality. Thus,

> A person's identification of himself as homosexual is often accompanied by a sense of relief, of freedom from

tension.

"Coming out, in essence, often signifies to the subject the end of a search for his identity" (Dark, 1971, pp.189-190). But "probably most persons who eventually identify themselves as homosexuals require a change in the (negative) meaning of the cognitive category homosexual before they can place themselves in the category" (ibid., p.189, insertion added). Both Dank (ibid.) and Troiden (1979) find that this change to a positive meaning of the homosexual category occurs, when it does, upon exposure to gay groups and subculture.

The signification of naturality is, however, maintained in the inverted ideology, even though it is displaced. This means that the signification of unnaturality is still possible and, indeed, inevitable. There will still be, therefore, situations in which the goal of the subject's desire can be powerfully threatened by the signification of unnaturality. Such situations include contexts in which the inverted ideology is not in force, for example in many work situations or in the presence of large groups of potentially homophobic people (Albro and Tully, 1979). The unnaturality signification may be displaced on to other stigmatised groups, such as paedophiles, transvestites, and other social deviants (Altman, 1971; Corbett, Troiden & Dodder, 1977; King, 1981). The feelings analysed here as proper to homophobia will then be felt in relation to members of these other groups.

6.4 The Second Possible Change : The Particularisation of Naturality

There is another broad rearticulation of the dominant ideology suggested by the account of the gay predicament developed in the last chapter. This transformation will be discussed in this section, as well as the process of reaching it, and its consequences for the investments of desire in discourse that the gay predicament involves.

Where the process of inverting the dominant ideology's signification of unnaturality involved a particular and redemptive application of the natural signification to what was elsewhere signified as unnatural as well as natural - that is, homosexuality - a further particularisation of the natural signification is conceivable. This involves the signification of the individual subject as natural, without requiring the other members of the group or society to be signified as natural in the same respects. Thus unnaturality can only be predicated of the individual's contradiction of that which is signified as natural in him/her alone.

Thus Troiden (1979) finds that "the effects of time and experience in the gay world provided an opportunity to become distanced from the homosexual role. Such distance might account for the lack of overriding feelings of distinctness (from heterosexuals in general)" (p.372, insertion added). This finding of a dis-identification with the homosexual category is supported by Weinberg (1970) and Dank (1971). As one of Dank's subjects said of homosexuality, "I feel its normal. What's normal for one person is not always normal for another" (Dank, 1971, p.190).

In the transformation of ideology by inversion, discussed in the last section, gayness in particular is signified as natural and so is rendered definitive of the subject, just as it was before the ideological inversion (Cass, 1979; De Cacco, 1981; Weinberg, 1978). This follows from the salience given to gayness as a characteristic by the emphatic attention it is given (Fein & Nuehring, 1981). In this second type of transformation, in contrast, the individual qua individual is signified as natural, so that her/his gayness becomes simply one of many attributes (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1981; Dank, 1971; Troiden, 1979). In terms of the second contradiction fundamental to the gay predicament, that of being signified as natural both with respect to being gay and to being the subject designated by "I", (re-explained in the last section), the inversion of ideology emphasises the naturality of gayness, while the particularisation of naturality emphasises that the subject designated by "I" is natural.

It is noteworthy that the signification of the individual as natural in the particularised ideology is precisely suited to the desire-impelled méconnaissance of the ego as a consistent essence. This clearly abolishes the contradictions in which desire is trapped in the dominant ideology, and it clearly restores the imaginary possibility of achieving the fundamental desire for the mother's desire to the fullest extent. The gay predicament is thus escaped.

There is a further implication of this, however. If this signification, how highly particularised, were removed altogether, one of the supports of the méconnaissance of the imaginary ego would be lost. A resistance beyond that of ideology would therefore come into play against the total abolition of the natural signification. At this point, then, the resistance of the subject's desire, to the abolition of the natural signification coincides with the resistance of ideology to that abolition.

In the particularised ideology, the subject would react to another individual with the abhorrence or repudiation aroused by the unnatural only when the other's behaviour contradicts what is signified as natural in that particular other person. It would be possible for such feelings to occur, in such a subject, because contradictions to the naturality signified idiosyncratically of him/herself would signify unnaturality. The subject's own naturality could therefore be challenged by the particular, idiosyncratic unnaturality of the other. This would occur by virtue of the vicarious and identificatory challenge to a subject's coherence or naturality presented by the unnatural other and discussed in the last chapter. Thus some knowledge of the other would be necessary before she/he could be perceived as unnatural in this idiosyncratic sense, since it is necessary to know what is natural for the other in order to know what contradicts it and by that contradiction is unnatural. To the degree that the subject inhabits a discourse in which this particularised signification of

naturality operates efficaciously, no other abhorrence of self or other based on unnaturality should be possible.

This signification of naturality and unnaturality may be conceived in the forms already considered: visibility and invisibility. For example, if a person with a social manner involving consistent self-control and invariable consideration for the feelings and limitations of others, begins repeatedly to go through periods of spontaneous, uncontrollable laughter or savage anger in social settings of the character of those she/he has always participated in, his/her behaviour and feelings may well appear unnatural in the present sense to others and him/herself. She/he will then arouse feelings of abhorrence or of lesser degrees of discomfort, feelings susceptible to the analysis of the gay predicament developed in this thesis.

The first ideological transformation described above, the inversion of unnaturality, is no doubt usually an essential precondition for the particularising transformation to occur. For a signification can only be efficacious at the level of desire if it is embodied in the Other. If the subject is to escape the traps of the dominant ideology in the first place, therefore, identification with a group whose ideology emphatically signifies homosexuality as natural is essential (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1980; Dank, 1971). Only once that escape from the gay predicament has properly begun to occur is it possible for the further particularisation of naturality to be entered into. In cases where the initial entrapment is less effective for the subject,

for whatever reason, it is conceivable that the inversion of ideology can be bypassed. Thus, for example, the particularisation of naturality may conceivably be achieved by the operation on the subject of the Other in which are located groups which have already entered into such particularisation, or by some other process.

The mechanisms by which the subject enters into the particularisation of ideology are at least twofold. The subject may, as suggested above, find groups in which such an ideology is already in operation. Or the subject may be sufficiently committed through the investments of desire both to an inverted ideology and to the dominant ideology, to be able to construct a discourse from the collision of the two. For the subject's desire will still be in contradiction as long as the dominant ideology has effect. And the fact that the signification of naturality in the dominant ideology is responsible for that contradiction can become evident to the subject once there is an alternative ideology, the inverted one, harbouring her/his desire and so making it possible to experience the effects of the dominant ideology in relative terms, as one of alternative ways of signifying the world. In turn, the maintenance of the natural signification in the alternative, inverted ideology, differently placed as it is, can become evident to the subject, since it has been picked up in the dominant ideology as a salient feature. The possibility of transforming the inverted ideology in its turn thus becomes evident. And it has become evident because of the interplay of the two discourses. As Therborn puts

it, "the irreducible multidimensionality of ideologies means that a crucial aspect of ideological struggles and of ideological relations of force is the articulation of a given type of ideology with others" (1980, p.27).

This process may be more accurately, if less accessibly, phrased, for the transformation is not a matter of a conscious "becoming evident". Motivation comes from desire, not from conscious perceptions of possibilities. In Lacan's words, "the motives of the unconscious are limited - a point on which Freud was quite clear from the outset and never altered his view - to sexual desire" (1977a, p.142). The motivation here is given by the fact that the subject's desire is still in contradiction because of the way naturality is still signified in the inverted ideology. The possibility of further change is given by the fact that the subject's desire is now invested in two networks of signifiers which may be brought into different relations with each other: "What one can do is to pin a signifier to a signifier and see what happens. But in that case, something new always results...namely, the appearance of a new meaning..." (Lacan, quoted in Laplanche and Leclaire, 1972, p.155).

Such a construction of new relations is precisely what characterises the operation of desire in the symbolic register: that is, the processes of condensation and displacement, or metaphoric and metonymic linkages of signifiers. "The...structural laws of condensation and displacement...are the laws of the unconscious. These laws are the same as those which create meaning in language" (Lacan, quoted in Lemaire, 1977, p.192). And,

> the mechanisms described by Freud as those of "the primary process", in which the unconscious assumes its rule, correspond exactly to the functions that this school believes determines (sic) the most radical aspects of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy - in other words, the signifier's effects of substitution and combination on the respectively synchronic and diachronic dimensions in which they appear in discourse (Lacan, 1977a, p.298, insertion added).

It may be mentioned also that it is not the subject or subjects who rearticulate the ideological discourse. It is the operation of the subjects' desire, and the operation of ideological discourse in structuring that desire, that bring about a rearticulation of ideological discourse. Lacan points out the importance of desire in shaping human life, despite the subject's subordination to the symbolic:

> Servitude and grandeur in which the living would be annihilated, if desire did not preserve its part in the interferences and pulsations which the cycles of Language cause to converge on him, when the confusion of tongues takes a hand and when the orders interfere with each other...(1968, p.42).

Lacan qualifies this again, by saying that "this desire itself, to be satisfied in man, requires that it be recognized, by the accord of the Word or by the struggle for

prestige, in the symbol or in the Imaginary" (ibid.). But he affirms nonetheless that

> we analysts have to deal with slaves who think they are masters, and who find in a Language whose mission is universal, the support of their servitude along with the bonds of its ambiguity. So much so that, as I might humorously put it, our goal is to reinstate in them the sovereign liberty displayed by Humpty Dumpty when he reminds Alice that after all he is the master of the signifier, even if he isn't the master of the signified in which his being took on its form (ibid., p.57).

Finally, he formulates the relation between individual desire and universal language/symbolic register in terms of langue and parole:

> "We therefore invariably rediscover our double reference to the Word (parole or speech) and to Language. In order to liberate the subject's Word (or parole), we introduce him into the Language of his desire, that is, into the primary language in which, beyond what he tells of himself, he is already talking to us unbeknownst to him...(ibid., insertions added).

This conceptualisation in terms of langue and parole which Lacan provides will be considered in its own right in a later section.

These two models of broad rearticulations of the dominant ideology, discussed in this section and the last one, are two points of logical conclusion of an escape from the contradictory positions constituting the gay predicament. There is of course a continuum of positions the subject may occupy in the process of reaching these moments of conclusion.

That they are logical positions has had a relevant and an irrelevant significance. It is relevant in that they are logically end-points because they involve an escape from contradictory positions of the subject of desire. These end-points involve less contradiction in the investments of desire in discourse than are involved in in-between positions in discourse. Before the position described by the efficacious ideological inversion has been reached, the subject has by definition no effective alternatives to the predicament inherent for her/him in the dominant ideology. And once the ideological inversion is being abandoned by desire in favour of an ideological discourse constructed by the interplay of the dominant and inverted discourses, there is no consistent discourse in terms of the natural signification for the subject until the particularised discourse is effectively invested by his/her desire. The absence of a consistent ideological discourse means the instability of a signification of the subject as natural, with an immediate threat to the desire for the mother's desire or the Other's recognition. So the fact that the end-points given by the two models are logically derived is relevant because the logic refers to the way that desire in fact operates.

That they are logical is irrelevant in that particular contexts and intervening factors may make the specific contradictions of positions of desire dealt with here of secondary significance. For example, fear of alienating the mother in person may militate against inversion of the dominant ideology. These models of ideological transformation would then no longer be based logically upon desire, and would no longer involve the most satisfactory or even possible positions for desire.

We have reached here another of the limits of this thesis. The present analysis deals with aspects of homophobia. Clearly, however, homophobia is not the only motivating factor in an individual's life. The intervention of other factors therefore makes it impossible to predict his/her behaviour on the basis of an understanding of homophobia alone. But this account is nonetheless valid as what is intended to be: an attempt at an analysis of the homophobic aspect of the individual's feelings and actions, and of the mechanisms by which that aspect of him/her operates.

In the next two sections some of the details of the present analysis of ideological transformations will be elaborated.

6.5 The Inversion of Ideology in Practice

The simple inversion of the signification of homosexuality as unnatural assumes the acceptance of the homosexual category as valid. For, in the dominant

ideology the binary opposition natural/unnatural is tied to the pair heterosexual/homosexual. The effecting of an inversion of the "unnatural" term in that opposition concentrates specifically on the part of the world linked to that term - that is, to categories such as that of those individuals of whom homosexuality may be predicated. Being gay is therefore assumed to be a fundamentally salient characteristic of the people to whom the category applies.

Thus the homosexual person is an essential being who is the same in essence as other homosexual people (Fein & Nuehring, 1981; Hart, 1982; Weinberg, 1978). It is not seen as simply a matter of one set of behaviours or feelings being given salience from a particular viewpoint, so that a different categorisation of types of people could negate the validity and significance of the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual. The definition of the subject by difference in discourse is denied, as it is wherever naturality is signified. The homosexual individual is seen as different from people with other sexual preferences, not by virtue of that sexual preference alone, but in essence. The fundamental traits which characterise his/her constitution as a human being are similar to the fundamental traits characterising the constitution or make-up of other homosexuals, at least those of the same sex, and different from those characterising heterosexuals (Hart, 1982; Weinberg, 1978).

This in turn assumes in the first place that there are

consistently characterising fundamental traits at all in human beings, and that there can be a general consistent similarity of fundamental traits amongst large groups of people, in particular heterosexuals on the one hand and homosexuals on the other. This again involves a denial of the synchronic and diachronic constitution of the subject.

As Altman put this whole consideration,

> Our homosexuality is a crucial part of our identity, not because of anything intrinsic about it but because social oppression has made it so. On one level to love someone of the same sex is remarkable inconsequential - after all, but for some anatomical differences, love for a man or woman is hardly another order of things - yet society has made of it something portentous, and we must expect homosexuals to accept this importance in stressing their identity (1971, p.230).

The living out of this ideological inversion will therefore require a perpetual maintenance of the méconnaissance implicit in asserting that homosexuals constitutionally belong together and are essences consistently different from other types of essence. And, again, this requirement is not to be conceived of at the level of an abstract logical prerequisite and abstractly necessary assumption. For the operation of desire in resolving its self-defeating predicament

depends on the above-mentioned assumptions that homosexuals constitute a meaningful category of essences. The subject's desire, as ever, is forced through the defiles of the signifying network, no less in its collusion with the operation of the inverted ideology than in its collusion with the operation of the dominant ideology, as the latter was discussed in the last chapter.

To return to the main point, then, the desire of the subjects who are on the way to inhabiting a discourse bearing an inverted ideology, and who are in the process of living this inversion out, will be characterised from the perspective relevant here by a contradiction between the true state of affairs and the misrecognised state of affairs, since the above-argued méconnaissance is asserted and maintained. This is the contradiction referred to by Lacan in a broader context as the disparity between the true and the real, given that the imaginary mode of relating to the world is a real and material part of the individual's existence. As he puts it, "the truth is always disturbing. We cannot even manage to get used to it. We are used to the real. The truth we repress" (1977a, p.169).

The fact of this contradiction allows a systematic understanding of the characteristics of the subcultures and lifestyles of those gays who have reached self acceptance via the inversion of ideology, as well as of the ways of relating to homosexuality of those in

Lesbians, on the other hand, where the inverted ideology is in force, may adopt stereotypically masculine characteristics (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p.197; Richardson, op. cit.). They may lower their voices, wear their clothes and hair in a stereotypically masculine fashion, and adopt physically aggressive stances with a similar message.

Those in contact with gays may share these stereotypes (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978; Weinberg, 1978). Hence male gays may be called "fairies" and referred to with a limp-wristed gesture (Plummer, 1981, p.53). And lesbians may be called "diesel-dykes", referring to the hypermasculinity imputed to truck-drivers, and "butch" (Richardson, ibid.).

This cross-gender stereotyping may be understood as an affirming of the naturality of homosexuals. For it signifies them, within each gender, to be a certain type of being, different in essence from their heterosexual opposites. For the gay person, in a sub-society in which his/her essential nature is acceptable and desirable, this restores the sense of consistency as a being, which is the primal object of desire. For the other in contact with gay people, this restores the sense of consistency in the gay other, the lack of which vicariously threatens his/her primal object of desire.

To put this in more detail, the contradictions engendered by the linking of the natural/unnatural opposition to a mutual assimilation of biological sex, gender identity,

gender role, and sexual behaviour and orientation, as discussed in the last chapter, are resolved by the stereotyping discussed above. For only consistent beings can be signified as natural. And this stereotyping links in an enduring way male biological sex-female gender identity-feminine gender role-female sexual behaviour and orientation, in the case of male gays, and female biological sex-male gender identity-masculine gender role-male sexual behaviour and orientation in the case of lesbians (Marshall, 1981, pp.135-136). All this turns, in this case, around the signifying properties of the gender role. Thus the consistent combination of these gender/sex categories, requisite for the signification of naturality in an unequivocal way, is achieved by a cross-sexed stereotype of gender role.

Clearly this process is dependent on the dominant ideology's mutual assimilation of the five gender/sex categories, in the course of the operation of its natural/unnatural oppositions. For it would not be meaningful or effective to signify a constant combination of the five categories in the inverted ideology if they were not already mutually assimilated by the dominant ideology as part of what must be consistent so as not to contradict naturality. Such a dependence on the dominant ideology is an inevitable limitation of a simple inversion of that ideology's signification of unnaturality.

There is a further important dependence on the dominant

ideology implicit in the use of stereotypically cross-sexed gender roles to signify naturality. For the fact is that homosexuality is actually eliminated as a phenomenon in this process.

> The curious result of such gender inversion, however, was that it effectively eliminated the need for a homosexual concept. For as long as the person in question could be conceptualized as a "non-man", his "real" sexual identity could be interpreted as "female heterosexual" (in a male body) rather than "homosexual male" (Marshall, op. cit., pp. 135-136).

Only heterosexuals remain. Thus masculine male gays are not seen in this context as "really" homosexual, so that "homosexuality consisted of older men taking younger boys as female substitutes...It was a homosexual situation satisfying a heterosexual need" (ibid., p.136).

Because of this extreme dependence on the dominant ideology, the inverted ideology renders the subject whose desire is invested in it susceptible to re-entrapment in the dominant ideology. For heterosexuality is still in fact the only natural one of the pair heterosexuality/homosexuality. Homosexuality is still in effect rendered invisible; where it is present it is re-defined as heterosexuality by the cross-sexed

gender roles. The subject in the inverted ideology is therefore still abhorrent of homosexuality as a sexual orientation towards people of the same biological gender, that is, insofar as it is different from heterosexuality. She/he has resolved this abhorrence in practice and in effect, but not in truth.

Thus when the subject in question enters into situations where the dominant ideology prevails, so that gender-role features in a different configuration with the other gender/sex categories, so that the subject's configuration of sex/gender categories is thereby threatened, the subject is vulnerable to experiencing the abhorrence of homosexuality as explicated in this chapter. Examples of such situations would be familial and work contexts, and simply being present in public situations (Albro and Tully, 1979). Ross (1978) shows perceived societal reaction to be a critical variable in understanding homosexual feelings and behaviour.

It is not, then, simply a matter of the possibility of being re-committed to the dominant ideology, a possibility which is always conceivable. An additional susceptibility is present, which lies in the fact that the unnaturality signification has not been inverted in relation to homosexuality as a same gender orientation, that is in relation to what makes homosexuality different from heterosexuality, but it has been inverted in relation to one of the gender/sex category configurations.

This explains the super-stereotypical nature of some

homosexual lifestyles, the way in which some gay men and women perform their respective cross-gender roles with noticeable skill in the smallest details. For to avoid the return of the abhorrence of homosexuality, the reality of the cross-gender (the woman in a man's body and vice-versa) must be asserted with great force. This also explains the finding that some of those in contact with homosexual males experience greater discomfort when the gay individuals are not effeminate (Storms, 1978). For then the spectre of unnaturality - homosexuality as different from heterosexuality - stalks the channels of desire.

It may be useful at this point to remember why the gender/sex categories have been introduced into the above analysis of the inversion of the unnatural signification of homosexuality. The unnatural/natural opposition is linked to homosexuality/heterosexuality; and homosexuality/heterosexuality are linked to configurations of a set of gender/sex categories. The analysis of how the signification of unnaturality affects homosexuality and how it and its effects change therefore automatically involves an analysis of certain configurations of these gender/sex categories.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality may be linked to other dimensions than gender/sex categories in their bondage to the unnaturality/naturality opposition, as suggested in the last chapter. And, as stated there too, further research will be needed to discover what they are or to elaborate them. The analysis of their

effects and resolution in terms of the contradictory positions into which the subject's desire is forced by ideology will still apply, so that the elaboration of these other dimensions and their effects can be integrated into the present understanding.

Clearly, only one configuration of the gender/sex categories has been discussed so far. Other configurations are possible which would necessitate a different inversion of the unnaturality signification to escape the abhorrence of homosexuality. One such configuration, which involves the recognition of homosexuality as different from heterosexuality, is that of male biological sex-male gender identity-masculine gender role-homosexual sexual behaviour and orientation (Marshall, op. cit., p.137). Here gender identity has been separated from gender role and sexual behaviour and orientation (Marshall, ibid., adapted). Gender role sterotypes no longer have the dominant part to play in this since they cannot restore the naturality of homosexuals by signifying a particular gender identity. This configuration of gender/sex categories actually falls under the particularisation of naturality, which will be discussed in the next section.

The form of inversion of the unnatural signification discussed here is clearly an extreme type. Keyed-down versions are found, such as, for example, the simple conviction that "homosexuals are different" (Hart, 1982; Weinberger & Millham, 1979, p.244). The sense of an essential type of being is thus maintained. But

gender-role need not play the key role here, although research would be needed to check whether the sense of "difference" unconsciously involves a sense of being cross-gendered. Where such a sense is found, as has been done by some psychoanalysts (e.g. Kubie, 1974), the operation of ideology and desire as articulated in this thesis may play a part as well as or in place of the identification with the parent of the opposite sex so far held responsible by psychoanalysis. It would be most interesting to explore the effects on psychoanalytic practice and theory of introducing this additional dimension. Unfortunately, the parameters of this thesis makethis an enquiry to be pursued elsewhere.

To find out in what other ways the unnatural signification is inverted, other than by inverting gender roles, sociological and psychoanalytic research will need to be undertaken which looks specifically for such inversions.

It may be hypothesized that if other inversions are possible, inversions with respect to different concomitants of homosexuality, the subject may be able to invest his/her desire in a number of such inversions. A scale is then conceivable ranging from the inhabiting of a discourse with only one such inversion, as in the case of cross-gender sterotyping discussed above, to the inhabiting of a discourse with a multitude of such inversions. The first case would then be most vulnerable to re-entrapment by the dominant ideology, and thus liable to extreme assertions of the lifestyle components which make the signification of naturality unequivocally possible, as

in the case of the extreme cross-gender stereotypes discussed above. The more inversions that are in effect, the less the dominant ideology would be able to threaten the subject's escape from it.

Again, further research is needed to construct a typology of such inversions and examine their processes of development in individual and group cases. These findings could then be integrated into the conceptualisation developed in this thesis, and be used to correct and refine it. This type of research is already burgeoning in the literature dealing with the coming-out process of gays, and will be discussed in the next chapter, where the present understandings will be compared with others.

The limiting case of a multiplicity of inversions would be the particularisation of naturality outlined above as the second transformation of ideology. Why it is the limiting case will be discussed in the next section, where its implications and details will be elaborated.

6.6 The Particularisation of Naturality in Practice

The particularisation of naturality, as suggested earlier, is characterised by the signification of the subject alone as natural. That is, naturality ceases to be signified of categories of people, who must then have fundamental traits in common. Naturality is signified only in terms of the individual, who need then have no fundamental traits in common with other individuals. This is the ultimate in méconnaissance in one sense, although it appears to be closer to a recognition of the

subject as constituted by difference than any case so far discussed. For it is dependent upon a certainty that the essential nature of the individual as posited by the imaginary ego is the truth of the matter. The subject could only abandon group support of the méconnaissance of the ego if that méconnaissance was firmly established for her/him. For it is, after all, a misrecognition on which the possibility depends of achieving the primal object of desire, recognition by the mother, and consequently support for this vital misrecognition would not be abandoned unless it was secure.

Such a firm establishment of the méconnaissance, which obviates dependence on direct support through direct recognition as a consistent being by others, suggests that such recognition has already played its part in confirming the méconnaissance of the ego. Clearly, the subject could have received this recognition in the course of her/his development independently of the gay aspect of his/her existence. But if she/he has received this necessary recognition, which has now allowed independence from immediate recognition, in the course of his/her development qua gay or qua one in contact with gays or gayness, it will by definition have to have been in a group. Thus the subject will have had to pass through the inversion of ideology. For this is the mechanism by which the subject challenged by the signification of homosexuality as unnatural resolves that challenge. And it occurs because of mutual recognition by people of a type. Or rather, by people occupying similar positions in being homophobic, who become of a type by

mutual recognition. The groundwork for the particularisation of naturality, then, is laid by the efficacious recognition by others of the imaginary ego of the subject. And if the subject's development in this regard has been crucially located within the gay dimension of his/her life, as is frequently the case and probably always to a degree the case, the inversion of ideology is the specific nature of that laying of the groundwork.

The process of change from the inversion of unnaturality to the particularisation of naturality is then on a continuum, and may be conceived as a particularising of categories. The inversion of ideology assumes a category embracing all homosexuals, at least within each biological gender. As discussed in the last section, however, naturality in one extreme case of inversion is in fact predicated of one configuration of gender/sex categories. Thus two such fonfigurations are signified as natural: the inverted one and that of the dominant ideology. A case was also mentioned in the last section in which the gender/sex categories could be dissociated from each other without signifying unnaturality. This case involved, in the female example, a female biological sex and feminine gender role and identity, with a homosexual set of behaviour and sexual orientation. This kind of dissociation allows a number of dissociated assertions of naturality: for example, transsexual operations, or the switching back and forth from male to female stereotypes and roles, or the leather macho image amongst male gays. In other words, unnaturality

as applied to certain configurations of gender/sex categories ceases to be an effective threat. This multiplication of possible assertions of naturality in fact challenges the concept of a natural category embracing all homosexuals. It is a process of particularisation of naturality.

It is clear that the subject may still inhabit contradictory positions in these alternative discourses. For example, there is the mention above of two opposed yet naturally signified configurations of the gender/sex categories. But in these cases the contradictions are between positions in different discourses, so that there is at least one discourse to which the subject's desire is committed in which it is not forced into self-defeating contradictions. Also, the dominant ideology makes some attributes more important than others in characterizing naturality. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this thesis, given that certain of the attributes given salience by the dominant ideology are taken as a starting point for this analysis, as is the fact itself that they are salient.

To return to the process of particularisation, then, the limiting case of such particularisations, as suggested earlier, is the case in question in this section, where the subject's idiosyncratic characteristics are natural. At this point assertion of the flamboyant type used by way of example of the inversion of ideology above seems unlikely. For the more particularised is naturality, the less directly related to the dominant ideology is the new particularising discourse. And, consequently,

the subject inhabiting the new ideological discourse is less susceptible to re-entrapment in the dominant ideology, for the reasons discussed at the end of the last section. The motivation to assert in the fact of the dominant ideology will be less, therefore, since the challenge posed by it is less and consequently requires less warding off. Thus where "I am gay and proud" (Altman, 1971, p.121) is an apt motto for the simple inversion of ideology, for the particularisation of naturality more apt would be "I am something and whatever it is I am proud of it".

Again a scale is conceivable, in which the scale of multiplicity of inversions suggested in the last section would be examined also in terms of degrees of particularisation. In this way individuals and groups could be considered in terms of their distance from either of the two broad transformations of ideology, depending on what questions are posed. For example, if the challenge to the dominant ideology is in question, it may be more useful to conceptualise the transformed ideologies in terms of inversion of the dominant ideology. This would lend itself more readily to a roughly quantitative evaluation. On the other hand, a conceptualisation in terms of the particularisation of naturality would lend itself more readily to a consideration of the qualitative difference or contrast between the dominant and alternative discourses. This second possibility would indeed be preferable for some purposes, including an attempt to develop strategies

of reinforcement for the inhabitants of the alternative ideologies. Thus if self-acceptance or absence of discrimination is in question, the particularisation pole of the ideological transformations may provide the most useful conceptualisation.

The behaviour of those inhabiting a discourse in which naturality is particularised cannot, by definition, be discussed in general terms. Such people will, however, be further discussed when this conceptualisation is compared with others, in the next chapter.

6.7 The Tension between Language and Speech

The process of transformation from abhorrence of homosexuality to acceptance of it may be seen as a detailed application of the tension between *langue* and *parole*, the social, or universal, aspect of language and the individual, or particular, aspect of language, a tension outlined in Chapter 2 (section 2.3). This viewpoint will serve both to demonstrate the consistency of the development of Lacanian views undertaken in this thesis, and to suggest part of the use of this development.

In the above-mentioned section Lacan was quoted as speaking of the "subject who is speaking" as "coming closer to the Word into which he will fully convert the Truth which his symptoms express (that is, the *parole vide* will become a *parole pleine*)" (quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.142, Wilden's insertion). Here "the Word" is an alternative translation of *parole*, speech,

and parole vide and parole pleine are respectively translated as "empty speech" and "full" or "true speech".

It will help to remember at this point the extent to which the being of the subject is bound up with language:

> Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him "by flesh and blood"; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and even beyond his death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his meaning or condemns it...(Lacan, 1977a, p.68).

Again, "The use of the Word requires vastly more vigilance in the science of man than it does anywhere else, for it engages in it the very being of its object" (Lacan, quoted in Wilden, op. cit., p.viii).

Lacan points out the relation of the individual to the universal:

> the living being would be annihilated, if desire did not preserve its part in the

> interferences and pulsations that the cycles of language cause to converge on him, when the confusion of tongues takes a hand and when the orders contradict one another in the tearing apart of the universal work (1977a, p.68).

But desire nonetheless operates only in relation to recognition by the Other, only in relation to the universal: "But for this desire itself to be satisfied in man requires that it be recognized, through the agreement of speech or through the struggle for prestige, in the symbol or in the imaginary" (ibid.). And, coming to the relation of this tension between individual and universal to transformations of the subject, Lacan explains that

> What is at stake in an analysis is the advent in the subject of that little reality that this desire sustains in him with respect to the symbolic conflicts and imaginary fixations as the means of their agreement, and our path is the intersubjective experience where this desire makes itself recognized (ibid.).

He concludes, "From this point on it will be seen that the problem is that of the relations between speech and language in the subject" (ibid.).

It may be mentioned in passing that Lacan refers to three "paradoxes" in these relations which appear in

the domain of psychoanalysis (ibid.). These are: the paradox involved in madness, that involved in neurosis, and "that of the subject who loses his meaning in the objectifications of discourse" (ibid., p.70). This last, "the most profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization" (ibid.), may be construed to cover the case of those subject to the signification of naturality, although it has, perhaps, wider implications.

The conceptualisation of homophobia developed here may therefore produce useful results if applied to psychoanalytic theory and practice, not simply in relation to the gay predicament and its resolution, but in general to those who have lost their "meaning in the objectifications of discourse". As has already been discussed in the introductory chapter and later, neurosis and even madness may need to be taken into account in explaining homophobia in particular cases. But this thesis is concerned with the third of Lacan's paradoxes in the relation of language to speech. The fact that his theory provides a common ground within which to conceptualise all these types of symptoms, however, provides a means of integrating this conceptualisation of homophobia with the other psychodynamic factors requiring consideration in particular cases. This, as suggested earlier in this chapter (section 6.5), is material for work which continues where this thesis leaves off.

Lacan's discussion of the language-speech tension in relation to the loss of meaning in the objectifications of discourse may, then, be applied to the symptom which is homophobia. As he puts it, "If the subject did not discover in a regression - often pushed right back to the 'mirror stage' - the enclosure of a stage in which his ego contains its imaginary exploits, there would hardly be any assignable limits to the credulity to which he must succumb in that situation" (ibid.). And he points out that "Here there is a language-barrier opposed to speech, and the precautions against verbalism that are a theme of the discourse of the 'normal' man in our culture merely serve to reinforce its thickness" (ibid., p.71). Thus, in a sense the resolution of homophobia is a reworking in language of the individual's development as it has progressed after her/his entry into language. It is a "regression" to the point of doubting the possibility of recognition by the mother, which doubt is the power of the abhorrence of homosexuality itself. "In effect, it is in the disintegration of the imaginary unity constituted by the ego that the subject finds the signifying material of his symptoms" (ibid., p.137). And "it is from the sort of interest aroused in him by the ego that the significations that turn his discourse away from those symptoms proceed" (ibid.). The resolution of homophobia is, then, as quoted at the start of this section, a "coming closer to the Word into which he will fully convert the Truth which his symptoms express (that is, the <u>parole vide</u> will become a <u>parole pleine</u>)".

This is another point at which this thesis suggests further applications to areas more central to psychoanalysis, in this case the nature of the movement from empty speech to full or true speech in therapeutic analysis itself, which is nothing other than the nature of the cure. Here, however, little more than suggestions can be made, and even then only insofar as this movement or process relates to the movement from homophobia to acceptance.

In keeping with what has been said in this chapter and Chapter 2 about the subject's individual speech and unconscious transformations of language, Lacan maintains that

> We always come back, then to our double reference to speech and to language. In order to free the subject's speech, we introduce him into the language of his desire, that is to say, into the primary language in which, beyond what he tells us of himself, he is already talking to us unknown to himself, and, in the first place, in the symbols of the symptom. In the symbolism brought to light in analysis, it is certainly a question of a language. This language...has the universal character of a language (langue that would be understood in all other languages (langues), but, at the same time, since it is the language that seizes desire at the very moment at which it is

> humanized by making itself recognized, it is absolutely particular to the subject (1977a, p.81).

It follows that the symptom homophobia is resolved by being translated into a discourse which is the language of the individual's desire. It is also clear from Lacan's statements that this language has the character of both a langue, and a parole, being particular to the subject. This is precisely what has been argued of the transformation of ideological discourse in this chapter. It is a movement from a pregiven discourse to a transformed one; it is also a movement from the destruction of the possibility of achieving the object of the subject's desire to its re-affirmation; and it is also a movement from a discourse bearing a universal signification of naturality to a discourse bearing a particular or individual one.

> Symptoms of conversion, inhibition, anguish, these are not there to offer you the opportunity to confirm their nodal points...; it is a question of untying these knots, and this means to return them to the Word (or speech) function that they hold in a discourse whose signification determines their use and sense (Lacan, quoted in Wilden, 1968, p.115, insertion added).

And Lacan affirms, too, the inevitable entrapment in the natural signification that remains: "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" (1968, p.63).

In Kristeva's words, "if the overly constraining and reductive meaning of a language made up of universals causes us to suffer", one may nonetheless find "oneself different, irreducible, for one is borne by a simply singular speech, not merging with the others, but then exposed to the black thrusts of a desire that borders on idiolect and aphasia" (1980, p.x). This is another link that cannot be pursued here, a link with Kristeva's concern for the language of desire insofar as it is uncommitted to meaning. Thus she opposes the symbolic to her restricted definition of the semiotic, which "refers to the actual organization, or disposition, within the body, of instinctual drives (hence the 'semiotic disposition') as they affect language and its practice, in dialectical conflict with le symbolique" (Roudiez, 1980, p.18).

This section has touched on a host of points at which the conceptual elaboration developed in this thesis may feed fruitfully back into the Lacanian framework from which it derives in part. As a specific application of that framework, it may well assist elaborations of other applications of Lacanian psychoanalysis, not least in the theorising of analytic therapy itself. To follow up these potential developments here would take us too far afield in terms both of relevance and of

space. But the extent to which the points made here relate to Lacan's psychoanalysis is well brought out by the following remarks:

> it is only through a speech that lifted the prohibition that the subject has brought to bear upon himself by his own words that he might obtain the absolution that would give him back his desire. But desire is simply the impossibility of such speech, which, in replying to the first can merely reduplicate its mark of prohibition by completing the split (Spaltung) which the subject undergoes by virtue of being a subject only in so far as he speaks (Lacan, 1977a, p.269).

6.8 Summary

It was argued in this chapter that the transformation from abhorrence of homosexuality to acceptance of it can only take place via a transformation of ideological discourse, since the desire for naturality is inescapable. It was further argued that such a transformation cannot be considered to abolish the signification of naturality without a revolution of the entire social formation, and was therefore considered only to be able to displace this signification.

Two broad transformations of ideological discourse were described; the inversion of unnaturality, and the particularisation of the natural signification. These,

it was argued, lie on a continuum. It was then argued that the manifestations of the acceptance of homosexuality could be understood in terms of the opposition or difference between the dominant and alternative ideologies, and in terms of the desire to maintain the méconnaissance of the natural signification in its new application. Finally, the conceptualisation of the resolution of homophobia developed in this chapter was put in terms of the tension between speech and language central to Lacan's psychoanalytic framework.

7 : COMPARISON WITH OTHER APPROACHES

As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, this chapter is more of a commentary on the present conceptualisation of homophobia and its resolution than an account of other models. The other approaches will not be explained in themselves or in detail, but only briefly insofar as they serve to support the statements of this one, to reveal its limitations of application, and to demonstrate its value in opening new areas to understanding and incompletely analysed areas to systematic rigour.

Several approaches to homophobia and its resolution need to be considered. The first is the classical psychoanalytic approach, which has it that the fact of pathology accounts for homophobia. This has been sufficiently dealt with in the Introduction and in the first two sections of Chapter Five. There it was argued that the explanation of homophobia as a consequence of pathology is not in fact an explanation but the arbitrary imposition of a value-judgement. Furthermore, it was argued that this attempted explanation is in any event too limiting, as a great deal can be gained by considering the role of ideology in explaining homophobia. The classical psychoanalytic approach leaves ideology completely out of account. This whole thesis, in a sense, is an argument for the value of including an analysis of the operation of ideological discourses in

an account of homophobia and its resolution. A further gain, which may be mentioned here, is that the present account reflects back on psychoanalytic theory itself in thought-provoking ways which could not be developed by approaching homophobia as a consequence of pathology. The classical psychoanalytic approach, then, will not be considered further here. The second approach which must be considered here is the radical or revolutionary psychoanalytic approach adopted by Hocquenghem (1978) and Mieli (1980). The third is that of symbolic interactionism and related frameworks. The fourth approach is a newly emerging classical psychoanalytic approach which, in contrast to the pathology account, attempts to consider the internalised effects of homophobia in their own right, and not as a function of some other pathology. The final approach to be considered here is that of semiotic accounts of deviancy.

7.1 Radical Psychoanalysis

As mentioned in the Introduction, the respective work of Hocquenghem and Mieli is radically subversive. They both attempt to compare the present capitalist social formation unfavourably with future completely transformed social formations. The account they give of the resolution of homophobia, that is, the change to acceptance, assumes such transformed social formations as a frame of reference. That is, they use their conceptions of ideal social

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unformulated nature of the libido" (Hocquenghem, p.80).

Hocquenghem argues that the explanations of homosexuality as pathology are an attempt to recuperate it (draw it into relation to the natural) by the purveyors of the dominant ideology. "Desire, as an autonomous and polymorphous force, must disappear...This is now the position of post-Freudian psychoanalysis, which is an institution of bourgeois society charged with controlling the libido" (p.63). Again, "Homosexuality must remain within the spheres of nosology, pathology, the neurotic mechanism, pathogenesis, etc.: no name is too terrifying to define it all" (p.46). Thus homosexuality "takes its place in...the Oedipus complex" (p.65); it is "surrendered to a recuperative interpretation" (p.80). This parallels the brief discussion of the need to explain homosexuality in Chapter Five (section 5.7).

Hocquenghem also touches on another aspect of the present understanding, the relation of sexual identity, what we have discussed as part of the imaginary consistency of the ego, to limited configurations of sex/gender categories. "The difference in the sexes and the attraction exerted by one sex upon the other are the preconditions of sexual identity" (p.87). Thus "all homosexuals...have a confused identity" because of "the impossibility of knowing whether one is male or female" (p.87).

Hocquenghem clearly supports a number of the conclusions reached in this analysis of homophobia. But he takes these conclusions as the starting point of his own analysis. Thus the effect of the unnaturality of homosexuality is only briefly touched on and only to demonstrate the attributes of the ideology he is investigating. The challenge presented by desire to fixed categories of what is natural is used by Hocquenghem in the context of a challenge to the imposition of the Oedipus complex on people at all. He passes over the actual mechanism of homophobia, the process by which ideology and desire collude within the present ideological context to produce the powerful individual reaction to the stigmatising label of "homosexual".

Hocquenghem's analysis, however, does suggest the limitations of the present understanding. He speaks not only of the threat of homosexuality, but also of its fascination. "The homosexual image contains a complex knot of dread and desire...Homosexuality expresses something - some aspect of desire - which appears nowhere else" (p.36). It would be interesting to consider this ambivalence in the light of the understanding of homophobia developed here, and vice-versa. This is work for which place must be found elsewhere.

Again, Hocquenghem thinks in terms of the abolition of the Oedipal triangle, the nuclear family. This is a much more wide-ranging view than the present one, which restricts itself to a non-radically transformed social formation. If Hocquenghem's analysis may be seen as

valid in terms of the present framework, which decision would depend on a careful reading of his work so as to synthesize it with the present perspective (in the way that this thesis has read and integrated aspects of Lacan and of theory of ideology), his broader view would suggest useful developments of the present analysis. It would suggest, for example, the extension of the present analysis of the finely detailed conjuncture of desire and ideology to an account of more radical transformations of society. Further, it would suggest a description of the series of transformations leading to given radically changed end-points. The present analysis could then be seen as a description of the first few transformations of this series.

To sum up, then, the comparison of this understanding with Hocquenghem's work suggests a place for this analysis in accounting for the phenomena which are taken as a starting point by other analyses, without having been thoroughly analysed themselves.

Mieli (1980), too, thinks in terms of a radically transformed social formation, in which the Oedipal complex itself is abolished. Unlike Hocquenghem, however, he adopts a classically Freudian rather than Lacanian framework. His work on homophobia cannot, therefore, easily be made continuous with the present analysis.

Mieli's account does nevertheless touch on the present one in a number of respects. He too points out that "This ideology upholds the 'naturalness' of the present

system..., absolutising it in an ahistorical manner and concealing its underlying transience" (1980, p.114). And he, also, is aware of the need of human subjects in the present ideology to be consistent objects: "a human being of 'imprecise' sex has a much harder time just getting around than does a male person who seems, by all external signs, to be a woman, or vice-versa" (p.27). And, again, Mieli too comes to the conclusion that, if the reaching of acceptance "does not want to confirm sexual roles in the very act of negating those on which it is itself based, it must present itself as a step towards trans-sexuality, i.e. something totally different, both from so-called 'normality' and from the dialectical opposite of this" (Mieli, 198I, pp.37-38, quoting Parinetto).

But these observations are all used to indicate what the gay predicament is, and to contrast the assumptions of homophobia with the true state of affairs, according to Mieli's interpretation of Freud and Marx. Their potential for explaining homophobia is not exploited. Homophobia is explained rather "by the repression of the homoerotic component of desire in those individuals who are apparently heterosexual", (p.23), and by "the sense of guilt, or the internalisation of the social condemnation, which befalls those who do not completely... identify...with the prescribed...model of male or female, i.e. who do not fit the Norm" (p.49). But the repression and sense of guilt at transgressing the norm are taken as bottom line points of explanation without being further

analysed themselves. The precise mechanisms by which the Norm helps to provoke guilt and repression are not considered. Differently put, the process by which a social phenomenon (the Norm) has powerful effects at the individual level (guilt and repression) is not considered.

Thus, Mieli's work, like Hocquenghem's, rests on phenomena analysed and in part accounted for by the present understanding. In both cases an unexplained area, a gap, between what is observed in the present social formations and the accounts given of it by the two theorists is accounted for by the present analysis.

7.2 The Interactionist Approach

i) The Interactionist Approach to Homophobia

The classic interactionist account of homosexual stigma is Plummer's (1975). His work will therefore be taken as a basis for the comparison of the present approach with interactionism. Accounts of deviance which cohere absolutely with Plummer's may, however, be found in the work of such seminal interactionist theorists as Becker (1973, 1974), Cohen (1973), Gagnon and Simon (1973), and Weinberg (1978).

As outlined in the Introduction, symbolic interactionism starts with three basic premises. These are that individuals act according to their perceptions of the meanings of events and objects in their worlds; that these meanings are developed in interaction with other people; and that the perceived meanings may be re-

negotiated. This, as argued there (section 1.2), allows only a limited analysis of the workings of the subjects themselves, since they are already assumed to exist as beings who interact and perceive meanings.

These premises, however, also display a programme consistent with the present one. "The first (premise) directs the student the study the 'inner' side of life, to look at meanings" (Plummer, 1975, p.11, insertion added). This fits in with our concern with the operation of desire and signification. "The second directs him to study the emergent and constantly changing nature of social life" (ibid.). This is consistent with our concern with transformation in terms of investments of desire in discourse. "While the third suggests that the individual is best constantly studied in conjunction with some significant others, or in collective action" (ibid.). This, finally, is consistent with our concern to integrate a social and individual pole of analysis. This was attempted in three ways. Firstly, it was attempted within psychoanalysis itself, in accordance with Lacan's analysis of the subject in terms of the Other. Secondly, it was attempted within the theory of ideology in terms of the relation between language and speech. Thirdly, it was attempted by developing a synthesis of the two theories insofar as they bore on the question at hand. The interactionist approach and this one may therefore be used in conjunction, if at cost to some interactionist statements resulting from the interactionist incapacity to analyse the nature of subjectivity. These costs will

emerge below.

As was pointed out in the Introduction, the interactionist account has so far produced a programme for research rather than a systematic account of homophobia. Nonetheless, some exploratory statements on homophobia have been made, and these can be usefully examined here.

Speaking of the interactionist approach to deviancy in general, Plummer explains that

> Instead of assuming that deviance leads to "reactions" and control, an alternative route - that control and reactions lead to deviancy - is taken...This is not to say that "reactions" create the behaviour in the first place (though on occasions they may even do that); it is simply to stress that the existence of "reactions" alters the nature and shape of those experiences to which the label of deviancy becomes attributed (1975, p.21).

This is clearly in line with the present approach to homophobia, with its stress on the importance of ideological significations. And the assertion of the "crucial dimension of self-reaction, by which individuals may process themselves as deviant" (ibid., p.22), supports the attention given here to psychodynamics.

Turning to the problem of the interaction between individual actor and social structures, Plummer notes

that for

> "analysts, the task of darting to and fro, between a world of 'objective, global realities' and a world of 'micro inter-subjective realities' is indeed a formidable one. Nobody has yet accomplished such a task, which remains a key problem for sociologists...Their complex interconnection will remain a research problem" (ibid., p.48).

This is one point at which the inability to analyse the nature of subjectivity limits the capacity of interactionism to make the world intelligible.

In contrast, Lacan's psychoanalysis allows a formalisation of this interaction between individual and general, in terms of the Other as the locus of both langue and parole.

> The Other is...the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks to him who hears... But this locus also extends as far into the subject as the laws of speech, that is to say, well beyond the discourse that takes its orders from the ego (Lacan, 1977a, 141).

This locus extends well beyond the ego both into the unconscious and into the symbolic structures of the social formation. Thus the interactionist programme is similar to the present one; but what this present

approach provides helps to show where the conceptual equipment brought to the task by interactionism falls short of its stated aims.

The fact that the present approach indicates the limitations of interactionism with respect to homophobia in turn illustrates what was meant earlier by saying that theoretical rigour is fundamental in determining the extent to which sense may be made of the world. And that is part of the place of a theoretical thesis such as this.

When Plummer comes to accounting for the effect of homophobia, its mechanisms, he too stresses the role of naturality in explaining the homophobic effect in self and others. Thus "for any individual of a society, there is a tremendous pressure upon him to apprehend his reality as if it were inevitable, absolute and unchanging...a man-made order becomes mystified as a Natural Order" (p.118). And he includes in the "natural order" the family, the gender system, and procreative sexuality (pp.119-120). This accounts for homophobia, in his view, because "the existence of homosexuality in this culture does pose a series of threats to the prevailing systems of classification about gender, family and sexuality" (p.120). Here he supports the present emphasis and also adduces additional dimensions of naturality for consideration.

Plummer considers a number of areas which this thesis does not. For example, he discusses in detail how the

negative judgement of homosexuality is communicated to people, and what factors influence this (p.116 ff.). And he considers the implications of a variety of particular cases, such as that of male hustlers who do not define themselves as homosexuals. The present conceptualisation suggests itself as a further approach to analysing these areas. Thus an interactionist perspective opens up questions which suggest further applications of the present understanding.

But, in the interactionist approach, the mechanisms by which the "threats" presented by homosexuality to the natural order has its effects on individuals, and the precise meaning of that threat, are not considered. Nor can they be further considered within an interactionist framework, in view of the lack of a suitable conceptualisation of subjectivity.

Thus, again, the present account serves to analyse and elaborate what is assumed by other accounts of homophobia. In the case of interactionism, it supplies what could not be provided by interactionism itself. Plummer, like most, if not all, interactionists, dismisses psychoanalysis on a variety of grounds, such as failure to take personal meanings into account and an abuse of the concept of sexuality. Many of these criticisms are true of the use that has been made of some interpretations of psychoanalysis. But the above comparison between the present approach and the interactionist one suggests that some understandings of psychoanalysis can show the same sensitivity as interactionism to the many levels of human complexity, and,

indeed, go beyond it in this respect.

Other interactionist accounts of homophobia show the same deficiencies as Plummer's in relation to this approach, and also support it in similar ways to his (e.g. Cass, 1979; Fein & Nuehring, 1981; Lee, 1977; Coleman; Troiden, 1979). The work of other interactionists will not be discussed, therefore, in this connection.

Plummer and other interactionists provide a description of the process of acquiring a homosexual identity. Some of the stages they discern in this process - the "coming out" process - fall under the change from abhorrence of homosexuality to acceptance of it, and will therefore be discussed in the next section. The first couple of stages, however, include homophobic feelings, and the descriptions of these stages provide some interesting details.

The first of Plummer's stages (of which there are four) he calls "sensitization". This consists in the first awareness of potential homosexuality, "the general process of constructing sexual meanings, modifying them, and in many cases neutralizing them" (1975, p.135). What is of interest to an analysis of homophobia is the notion of neutralisation, which covers a variety of techniques and processes by which a homosexual interpretation of feelings and behaviours is avoided. One of these has already been considered, that is, the explaining away of homosexuality as, for example, fear of women (Chapter Five, section 5.7). Plummer calls

this the providing of "accounts" (p.140).

Plummer also lists a number of other techniques or processes by which an interpretation of homosexuality is neutralised. These include subcultural norms which allow certain technically homosexual acts to be performed without being interpreted as such. Thus Reiss (1973) finds a subculture of male hustlers who do not see themselves as homosexual on grounds such as that they fellate men only for money. Another neutralising factor is the demands of the situation the potentially homosexual behaviour occurs in. Thus homosexuality in prisons tends not to be interpreted as such, but as a substitute for heterosexuality. Another "denial technique" (Plummer, 1975, p.82) is counter-reaction (ibid.), where the gay person becomes an active moral disapprover of gays and gayness. Cass (1979) provides a superbly organised account of a greater number of such neutralisation techniques and processes. They are mentioned here only to indicate what else the present analysis of homophobia can potentially account for, and to suggest that a useful study could be made of the systematic relation, if any exists, between these neutralisation devices and the present analysis of the gay predicament.

Plummer's second stage, "signification", deals with self-abhorrence itself, and has therefore already been discussed. The other interactionist researchers on the coming out process, cited earlier in this section, offer similar accounts to Plummer's, although in more detail.

The next section will consider the interactionist account of the change from abhorrence to acceptance.

ii) The Interactionist Approach to the Change to Acceptance

Plummer's (1975) work is also representative of interactionist thought in the area of the change from abhorrence to acceptance of homosexuality. Useful elaborations are also provided, however, by other interactionists, and their work will be considered accordingly in conjunction with his. No work seems to have been done on the equivalent of the "coming out" process in those who are in contact with others who are gay. This comparison is therefore restricted to the case of gays themselves. It would be interesting to see if research fonfirms the identity claimed in this thesis between the homophobic experience in gays and in those in contact with them. As matters stand at present, this thesis fills a gap in this respect.

As mentioned in the previous section, Plummer divides the coming out process into four stages. As with the stages proposed by other intrractionist researchers, the experience covered by his earlier stages still counts in the present analysis as pre-acceptance. They have therefore been considered in the preceding section, on homophobia itself. But his third phase, "coming out", itself, he defines as "the process by which individuals... are 'reborn' into the organized aspects of the homosexual community - a process during which they come to define themselves as 'homosexuals'" (1975, p.147).

This involves the rebuilding of an identity and a resolution of both the subjective and objective problems associated with self-abhorrence and consequent isolation (p.148).

Dank (1971), too, finds the crucial aspect of the coming out process to be a self-identification as homosexual, "the end of a search for...identity" (p.190). He finds this identity formation to be dependent on the content of the homosexual category having been made positive by interaction with self-accepting homosexuals, and he finds it brings relief from tension (pp.190-191). Furthermore, he finds the change to be "intimately related to the access of knowledge and information concerning homosexuals and homosexuality" (p.193) and to the general reversal of silence about homosexuality.

All of these findings are supported by Troïden (1979) who, like Plummer, divides the coming out process into four stages. His first three stages are the same as Plummer's, so that in his analysis of coming out proper, he is talking about the same thing as Plummer. Dank, too, covers the same phenomena in his investigation of coming out.

These observations support, in detail, the account of ideological inversion given in the last chapter. There is a change from abhorrence of homosexuality to a positive attitude towards it. This is held to occur as

a consequence of meeting other homosexuals and reversing the injunction to silence on homosexuality. And it involves a sense of identity, of consistent self-hood, a sense of being something. The relation of the present conceptualisation to the concept of identity will be recurred to in the Conclusion of the thesis.

These are all descriptive accounts, however. No explanation is given of how it is possible for such changes to occur, and the details of the processes by which the observed contributing factors interrelate are not analysed. This is in accordance with the inability of interactionism, discussed in the last section, to analyse the nature of subjectivity itself. The analysis developed in this thesis, therefore, supplies here, too, what has not and cannot be provided by interactionist accounts of the coming out process.

Plummer's fourth stage in the coming out process is that of "stabilizing homosexuality" (1975, p.150). This in fact fits in with the inversion of ideology, which, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, is the form of acceptance corresponding to the reaching of acceptance discussed immediately above. "Stabilizing homosexuality" fits in with the inversion of ideology because it involves what Plummer calls "role imprisonment" (p.152). In role imprisonment the gay individual finds it easiest to see him/herself as defined by his/her homosexuality, both because of the rewards of belonging to the gay community and because of the homophobic pressures exerted by the external world. Troiden (1979) partly

conceives his fourth stage of coming out ("commitment") in similar terms: "commitment is indicated when homosexuality is adopted as a way of life" (p.370).

This was given a further level of explanation in the last chapter (section 6.4), in the discussion of the way the need to be recognised as something consistent and positive leads to gay subcultural behaviour, and of how reaction to the threat of re-entrapment by the dominant ideology leads to greater degrees of stereotypical subcultural behaviour.

But Plummer does make room for the possibility that "in the distant future" there may be "a decrease of polarization...with an accompanying decrease in rigid, exclusive forms of sexuality" (p.153). Dank (1971) and Troiden (1979) find this already to have occurred in some cases.

This fits in with what has been analysed here as the particularisation of naturality. For example, Troiden finds time and experience in the gay world to lead to "a relative lack of overriding feelings, of distinctness (from heterosexuals in general) (ibid., p.372, insertion added). And, to quote one of Dank's (1971) subjects, "What's normal for one person is not always normal for another" (p.190). Another subject's attitude is expressed as follows: "Just because I happen to like strawberry ice-cream and they like vanilla, doesn't make them right or me right" (ibid.). The former over-riding salience of the homosexual aspect of their personalities no longer applies. What is "all right" is seen as right

for the individual, not for categories of individuals.

This coheres with the present understanding of the inhabitant of the particularised ideology as seeing what is natural as natural for the individual alone. And that, the de-emphasis of the membership of the homosexual category means the reduction of the salience of being homosexual, to its being one of many character traits of equal importance to it, is also supported by the above observations.

Here, as in the case of the interactionist accounts of the inversion of unnaturality, a detailed account of processes and mechanisms of change in the subject is absent, and is supplied by the present analysis.

7.3 A Classical Psychoanalytic Approach

Now that the contribution of the present analysis has been more clearly delineated by comparison with other approaches, it may be illuminating to compare it to an approach which considers the mechanisms of homophobia in gays from a classical psychoanalytic perspective. Such an approach is made in a paper by Malyon (1982), on "internalized homophobia" (p.59).

Malyon argues that internalised homophobia becomes a conscious and unconscious part of the ego, and "as a component of the ego, it influences identity formation, self-esteem, the elaboration of defenses, patterns of cognition, psychological integrity, and object relations" (1982, p.60). When homosexual desires become manifest,

they are thus already made "ego alien" by "a socialized predisposition which...militates against their integration" (p.60). Malyon goes on to say that the primary developmental task of adolescence is identity formation (following Erikson, 1963), and that "identity develops in an interpersonal context" (p.60). The consequence for the homophobic gay person is "an interruption...of the process of identity formation and epigenesis of ego-integrity" (p.61). The resolution of the identity problem is seen as a consolidation of identity through a restoration of ego development (p.61).

This description may be seen as closely corresponding to the account developed in this thesis. The sense of what is natural and hence unnatural (including homosexuality) was in effect argued in Chapter Four to influence; identity formation and psychological integrity (the subject is signified by "I" as natural and hence as an object with integrity); patterns of cognition (the world is organised, given meaning, for the subject by language in general and ideology in particular); and the elaboration of defenses (unnaturality is denied and repudiated).

Homosexuality, in our account, too, is clearly "ego alien" and its integration is militated against. And this is clearly because of the socialized predisposition which we analysed as a collusion between the interpellation of the subject by ideological discourses which signify the world as natural, and a subject's desire which constitutes the imaginary ego as an object. And the consequence for the homosexual is in our view

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discourse.

Malyon is of course dealing with the effects of internalised homophobia, so that his individualistic framework is appropriate to his purposes. But for an account of

the mechanisms by which the stigma on homosexuality has such a strong effect on individuals, its lack of place for an account of the links provided by signifying and ideological practice make it a deficient analysis in relation to the present one.

7.4 Semiotic Approaches to Deviancy

The conceptualisation developed in this thesis has much in common with semiotic approaches to deviance. In addition, its psychoanalytic component serves to fill out some aspects of such semiotic accounts.

Firstly, the entire problematic of the thesis may be situated within the implications of the following representative statement:

> Any elision, truncation or convergence of prevailing linguistic and ideological categories can have profoundly disorienting effects. These deviations briefly expose the arbitrary nature of the codes which underly and shape all forms of discourse... Notions concerning the sanctity of language are intimately bound up with ideas of social order. The limits of acceptable linguistic expression are prescribed by a number of apparently universal taboos. These taboos guarantee the continuing "transparency" (the taken-for-grantedness) of meaning.
>
> Predictably, then, violations of the

> authorized codes through which the social world is organized and experienced have considerable power to provoke and to disturb (Hebdige, 1979, p.91).

It is such an approach which allows the kind of question asked in this thesis, and the type of answer given to it: the question, why does a particular categorisation have the emotional effect it does; and the answer, because, in part, categories are bound up with the organisation and experience of the world. The psychoanalytic dimension provides a means of explaining the precise mechanisms through which such categories operate on the subject.

A more specific comment on categories is made by Hall (1977). He speaks of codes which

> constitute the criss-crossing frames of reference, the sedimentations of meaning and connotation, which cover the face of social life and render it classifiable, intelligible, meaningful...The different areas of social life...appear to be "held together" in social intellegibility (sic) by this web of preferred meanings. These networks are clustered into domains, which appear to link, naturally, certain things to certain other things, within a context, and to exclude others (pp.330-331, insertion added).

The homosexual category is one such domain, even to the agreement on the assumption of natural links in such categories, as in the case of sexual orientation and the gender/sex categories. Again, the application of psychoanalytic understanding allows a more detailed analysis of how such signifying networks operate on the subject, and why they do it with such effect.

The necessity of analysing the effects of deviance in terms of the social formation is justified by Hall in similar terms to those of this thesis. He argues that people involuntarily enter conditions which are not of their making (ibid., p.320), so that

> the terms through which men "make sense" of their world, experience their objective situation as a subjective experience, and "come to consciousness" of who and what they are, are not in their own keeping and will not, consequently, transparently reflect their situation (ibid., p.320).

Again, the linking of different levels of analysis, in our case the psychoanalytic and the ideological, is given a place:

> If...this social formation...is not to be conceptualised as a series of unrelated practices, then this relatedness must be "thought" through the different mechanisms which connect one with another within the "whole"...The principle of determinacy...

> ...must therefore be thought..as the structured sum of the different determinations, the structure of their overall effects. Althusser gives to this double way of conceiving the "relative autonomy" of practices and their "determination in the last instance", the term, over-determination (ibid., p.327).

The point is also made that the natural, the taken-for-granted, is disseminated by visibility, so that when the unnatural, that which violates the taken-for-granted codes, becomes public, it becomes hyper-visible by contradicting its inconceivability (Hebdige, pp.101-102). Thus the possibility of using the shocking unconventional significations to establish a strengthening group identity is accounted for by semiotic deviancy theory too.

The recuperation of deviant ideologies by dominant ones is a topic extensively dealt with in the work on deviance under discussion. While it is unfortunately beyond the province of this thesis, an analysis of such recuperations together with the conceptualisation of alternative ideologies developed in the last chapter could be most fruitful for both areas of interest.

7.5 SUMMARY

This chapter compared the present approach to a number of others. It appears that, in some cases, the details of some links within theories of homophobia and its resolution, details which have remained unconsidered within the theories, are provided by the present account.

These details consist in the mechanisms and processes by which the social stigmatisation of homosexuality come to have an effect of great power on individuals.

In other cases, the present approach explained or accounted for the phenomena which were simply assumed by other approaches, or which the other approaches lacked the conceptual equipment to attempt to analyse further.

Finally, the present account is supported in many respects by other accounts and frameworks, while in each case adding extra dimensions of explanatory power.

8 CONCLUSION

It remains to conclude by recalling the place of a theoretical thesis, and by summarising the contributions this thesis makes and some of the future work that could be based on it.

It is useful to recall the place and value of a theoretical thesis, as this one could be objected to on the grounds that it need not necessarily be able to account for any given case of homophobia and its resolution, since it deals with only one of many possible aspects of the phenomena in question.

This conceptualisation has been developed as a response to the specific question of how to conceive the process by which the social stigmatisation of homosexuality creates such a powerful abhorrence at the level of individual feelings in certain cultures. It therefore answers a very specific question which is located at a high level of generality. Furthermore, the answer offered here is specifically tailored to meet the requirements of this limited question. It therefore involves the development of a synthesis between a theory of ideology and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The product of this synthesis is a highly abstract framework which is, again, located at a high level of generality. The analysis will therefore inevitably account for only a few aspects of most of the phenomena to which it has application, since it is originally a response to so specific a question. It will, however,

equally inevitably have at least some bearing on a great number of phenomena and questions, since it is pitched at a general level. Furthermore, because of its specificity of application and origin, it will account in rigorous detail for those aspects that it does account for. But even as a conceptualisation of the gay predicament itself, it is intended to offer only one level of analysis, allowing even in its original application for overdetermination. And it could have been less limited only at the extensive cost of systematic detail and rigour.

The value of this analysis, then, is in fact dependent upon the limitation and specificity of its application. And this is so for additional and far-reaching reasons. For the human phenomena which it attempts to deal with require by their nature a multitude of levels of analysis if they are to be fully accounted for. And the mutual and internal theoretical consistency of each of the frameworks applied in these analyses can only be assessed to the degree that the detailed implications of each are elaborated. That is to say, they can only be used to correct and refine each other to this degree. This, then, is another reason why the value of this analysis depends on a rigorous elaboration within its own limits.

And this, too, is why the continuities of this analysis with other levels of analysis and other frameworks have been systematically posited here. For its value lies not only in its relevance to the psychological data to which it is directly applied, but also in its application

to the fields on which it borders, and in its reflexive application to all the theoretical frameworks out of which it derives. For the use of these frameworks inevitably develops implications for their own consistency and applicability, implications which are not necessarily apparent in the frameworks themselves. Some of these implications have been hinted at in the course of the thesis, and will be recalled shortly. This is the strength of a theoretical analysis, given its limitations in fully accounting for concrete particular cases.

This type of thesis, then, has a valid place in social scientific work. The specific contributions of this one will now be summarised.

The account of homophobia and its resolution given here consists firstly in an explanation of how it is possible for a social phenomenon, stigmatisation of homosexuality, to have the powerful emotional effect that it does at an individual level; and secondly, in an elaboration of the details of that effect and of the ways in which it is resolved. Thus a formalisation is developed of the relation between the apparently individual and the apparently social, and that formalisation is used to analyse, in detail, homophobia and its resolution.

It should be clear from Chapter Seven that this account fills a gap in some preceding analyses of homophobia

and of what is involved in gay liberation (e.g. that of radical psychoanalysis), and answers questions which cannot even be asked by yet other approaches (e.g. interactionism and classical psychoanalysis). This is partly a result of the present use of Lacan's highly sophisticated analysis of the nature of subjectivity, involving as it does an appreciation of the place of the Other, the symbolic, in the constitution of a human subject.

But perhaps the most original contributions this thesis makes, are the detailed working out of the implications of the concept of naturality, and the use of that concept as an interface between the province of a theory of ideology and the province of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Thus a contribution has perhaps been made at a more general level, to the theory of subjectivity and signifying practice as currently practiced by such semioticians as Kristeva (1980) and Hall (1974, 1977).

On a smaller scale again, this thesis may be seen as an attempt to recuperate psychoanalysis for gay liberation, in the same way in which Juliet Mitchell (1974) has attempted to recuperate it for feminism.

A number of directions for future work based on the present work immediately suggest themselves. Firstly, and most obviously, psychoanalytic research into homophobic experience and the experience of its resolution, and sociological/social psychological research into the same areas and the area of the characteristics and trends of gay subcultures, would

considerations as those offered here.

It should perhaps be emphasised that the present account of homophobia does not aim to replace aetiological accounts of homosexuality. It simply brings additional considerations to the fore. Thus what would be modified in psychoanalytic theory, if anything, is not the presence of aetiological understandings of homosexuality, but the use that is made of them in psychoanalytic theory and practice. Such understandings must have a place in psychoanalysis; but that place may have to be differently conceived.

Thirdly, a contribution may be developed from this work to the theory of identity. The comparison in Chapter Seven between this conceptualisation of the change to acceptance and that of interactionist researchers suggested a link between the present account of the desire to be a natural object with consistent characteristics, such as may be recognised by the Other, or, originally by the mother, and the concept of identity. The present analysis gives a rigorous definition of identity in terms of the characteristics of naturality. It also gives a thorough account of the significance of such identity for the individual and for the relation of the individual to the social formation. This analysis could very possibly be extended to answer some of the questions associated with the concept of identity.

Finally, insofar as the question of identity formation enters into the process of psychotherapy; and insofar as the relation between language and speech, social and individual, enters into that process, this analysis may be useful in pursuing aspects of the theory of

psychotherapy. In particular, the present use of the concepts of naturality and unnaturality may be of use, in that the psychotherapeutic situation is artificial from the viewpoint of everyday relating, and also depends, in one sense, on a denial of naturality - for it affirms the historical constitution of the subject. Thus the feelings that have been analysed here as proper to homophobia may be part of the resistance experienced in psychotherapy, and could perhaps be usefully analysed in terms of the present account.

This in turn suggests other applications of the present use of the natural/unnatural opposition. For example, women in jobs which are "naturally" for men only, working class people in haute bourgeois situations and vice-versa, immigrants to foreign cultures, may all experience the feelings analysed here as proper to homophobia (Fein & Nuehring, 1981), in relation to themselves and to others, and originating in themselves and in others reacting to them. Their feelings and the feelings of those in contact with them could then be understood in terms of the present analysis, and that understanding may then help to do something effective about their predicament. It may be mentioned in passing that the above mentioned applications of this theory to women may have bearing on some of the conceptual problems with which Marxist feminist theory is beset (Barrett, 1980).

These, then, are some of the contributions and potential contributions of this thesis.

APPENDIX : GLOSSARY OF SOME LACANIAN TERMS

This glossary of a few of Lacan's more frequently used terms is taken from translation notes prepared by the translater of Lacan's The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1977b), Alan Sheridan, with the assistance of Jacques-Alain Miller. The full glossary they provide may be found in Lacan, (1977b, p.277ff.).

DESIRE (désir; Wunsch, Begierde, Lust). The Standard Edition translates Freud's "Wunsch" as "wish", which corresponds closely to the German word. Freud's French translators, however, have always used "désir", rather than "voeu", which corresponds to "Wunsch" and "wish", but is less widely used in current French. The crucial distinction between "Wunsch" and "wish", on the one hand, and "désir", on the other, is that the German and English words are limited to individual, isolated acts of wishing, while the French has the much stronger implication of a continuous force. It is this implication that Lacan has elaborated and placed at the centre of his psycho-analytic theory, which is why I have rendered "désir" by "desire". Furthermore, Lacan has linked the concept of "desire" with "need" (besoin) and "demand" (demande) in the following way.

The human individual sets out with a particular organism, with certain biological needs, which are satisfied by certain objects. What effect does the acquisition of language have on these needs? All speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation. By the same token, that which comes from the Other is treated not so

much as a particular satisfaction of a need, but rather as a response to an appeal, a gift, a token of love. There is no adequation between the need and the demand that conveys it; indeed, it is the gap between them that constitutes desire, at once particular like the first and absolute like the second. Desire (fundamentally in the singular) is a perpetual effect of symbolic articulation. It is not an appetite; it is essentially excentric and insatiable. That is why Lacan coordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it (one is reminded of fetishism).

IMAGINARY, SYMBOLIC, REAL (imaginaire, symbolique, réel). Of these three terms, the "imaginary" was the first to appear, well before the Rome Report of 1953. At the time, Lacan regarded the "imago" as the proper study of psychology and identification as the fundamental psychical process. The imaginary was then the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined. In this respect, "imaginary" is not simply the opposite of "real"; the image certainly belongs to reality and Lacan sought in animal ethology facts that brought out formative effects comparable to that described in "the mirror stage".

The notion of the "symbolic" came to the forefront in the Rome Report. The symbols referred to here are not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, and forming a closed order - the question

is whether this order is or is not complete. Henceforth it is the symbolic, not the imaginary, that is seen to be the determining order of the subject, and its effects are radical; the subject, in Lacan's sense, is himself an effect of the symbolic. Lévi-Strauss's formalization of the elementary structures of kinship and its use of Jakobson's binarism provided the basis for Lacan's conception of the symbolic - a conception, however, that goes well beyond its origins. According to Lacan, a distinction must be drawn between what belongs in experience to the order of the symbolic and what belongs to the imaginary. In particular, the relation between the subject, on the one hand, and the signifiers, speech, language, on the other, is frequently contrasted with the imaginary relation, that between the ego and its images. In each case, many problems derive from the relations between these two dimensions.

The "real" emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary; it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its "raw" state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic x. This Lacanian concept of the "real" is not to be confused with reality, which is perfectly knowable; the subject of desire knows no more than that, since for it reality is entirely phantasmatic.

The term "real", which was at first of only minor importance, acting as a kind of safety rail, has gradually been

developed, and its signification has been considerably altered. It began, naturally enough, by presenting, in relation to symbolic substitutions and imaginary variations, a function of constancy: "the real is that which always returns to the same place". It then became that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: "the real is the impossible". It is in this sense that the term begins to appear regularly, as an adjective, to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped; the umbilical cord of the symbolic.

As distinguished by Lacan, these three dimensions are, as we say, profoundly heterogeneous. Yet the fact that the three terms have been linked together in a series raises the question as to what they have in common, a question to which Lacan has addressed himself in his most recent thinking on the subject of the Borromean knot (Séminaire 1974-75, entitled "R.S.I").

JOUISSANCE (jouissance). There is no adequate translation in English of this word. "Enjoyment" conveys the sense, contained in jouissance, of enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotations it still retains in French. (Jouir is slang for "to come"). "Pleasure", on the other hand, is pre-empted by "plaisir" - and Lacan uses the two terms quite differently. "Pleasure" obeys the law of homeostasis that Freud evokes in Beyond the Pleasure

Principle, whereby, through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. "Jouissance" transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle.

LACK (manque). "Manque" is translated here as "lack", except in the expression, created by Lacan, "manque-à-etre", for which Lacan himself has proposed the English neologism "want-to-be".

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